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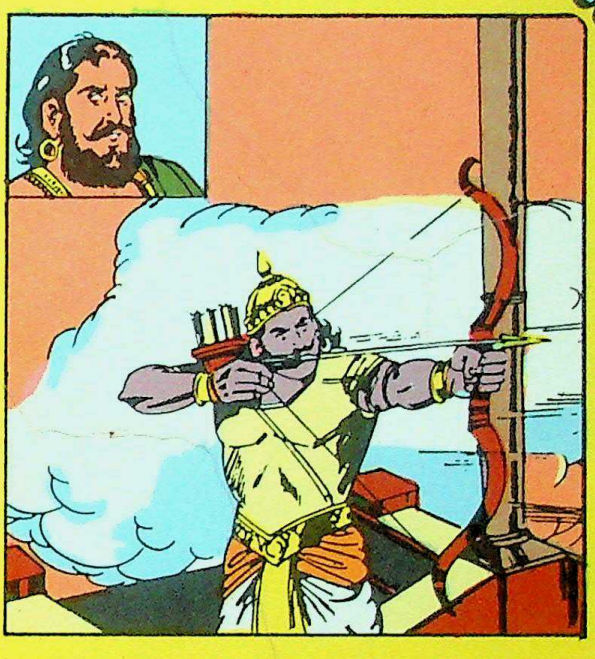
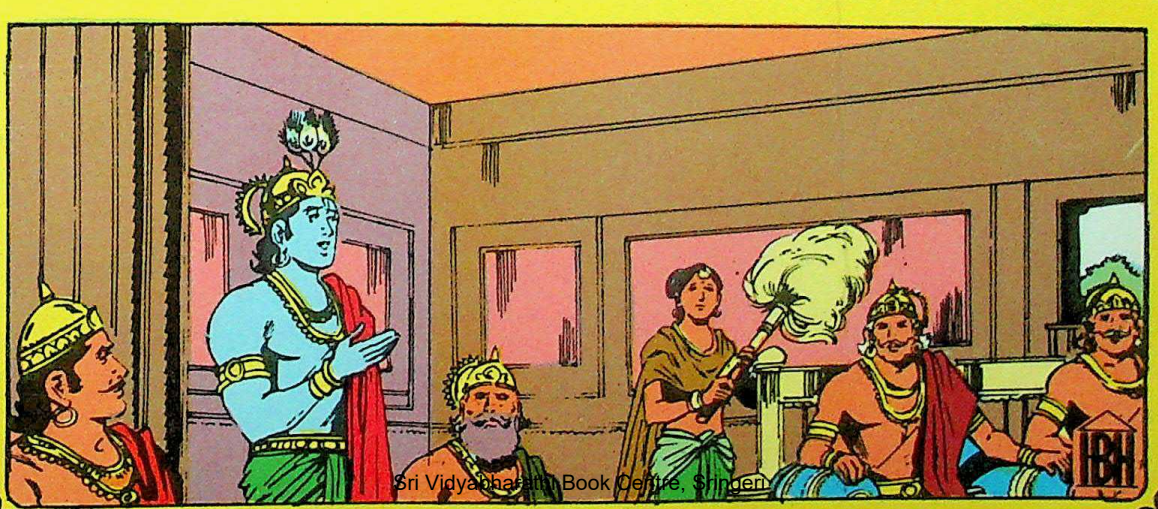
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

MAHABHARATA

THE PRELUDE TO WAR

- THE PANDAVAS AT VIRATA'S PALACE
- PANIC IN THE KAURAVA CAMP
- SANJAYA'S MISSION





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THE PRELUDE TO THE WAR

Veda Vyasa's epic on the Bharata race was first recited in public by his disciple Vaishampayana at the Sarpa Satra (a 12-year-long snake sacrifice) conducted by King Janamejaya, the great grandson of Vyasa.

The earlier volumes of our rendering of the Mahabharata traced the lineage of the Kauravas and Pandavas, their growing animosity and the game of dice which resulted in the Pandavas being banished to the forest for thirteen years. Also described was Arjuna's journey to the Himalayas to obtain celestial weapons as well as the pilgrimage undertaken by the other Pandavas.

The following three volumes describe the thirteenth year of exile during which the Pandavas lived in disguise at the court of Virata, King of Matsya, the attack and defeat of the Kaurava army, the marriage of Abhimanyu to Uttara, and the proposal of peace from Dhritarashtra sent through Sanjaya to the Pandavas.

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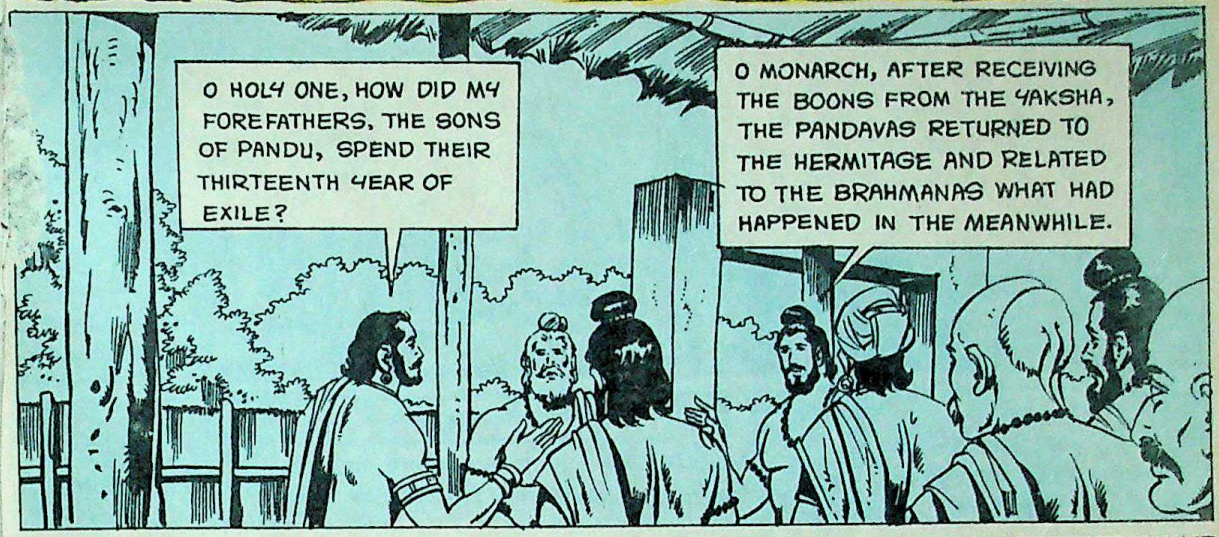
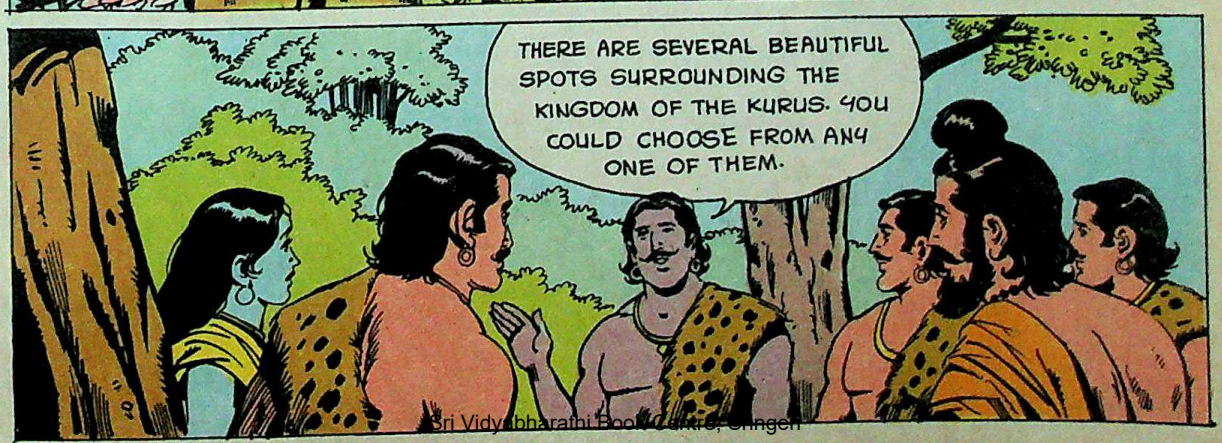
Mahabharata-25

THE PANDAVAS AT VIRATA'S PALACE





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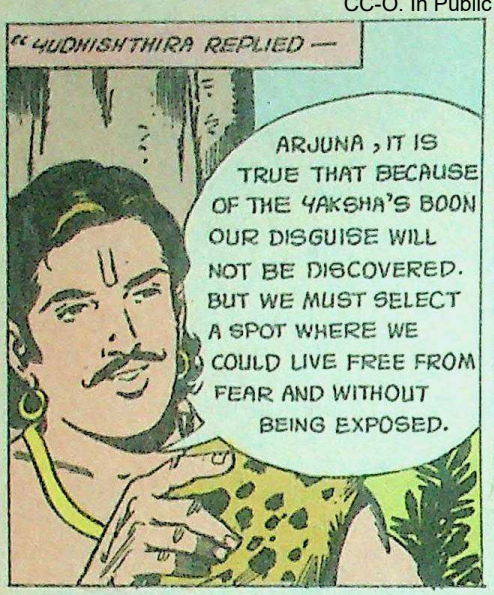

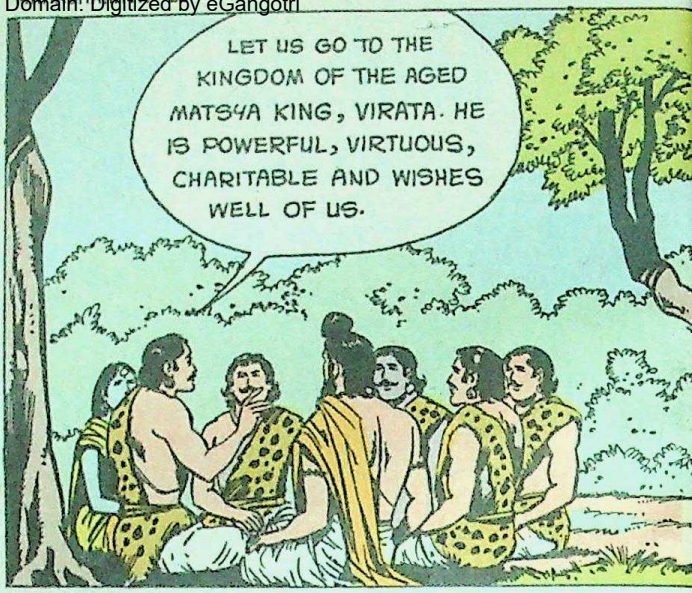

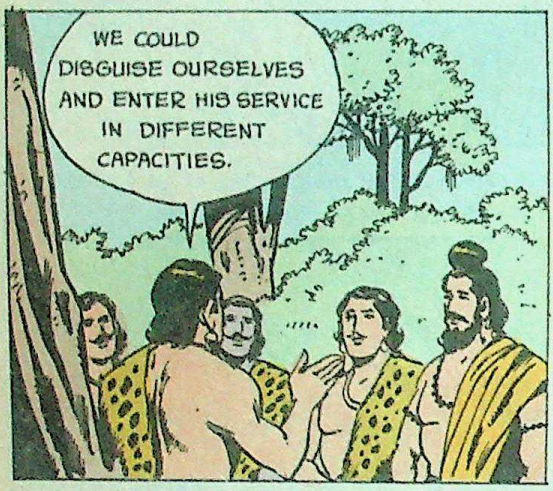

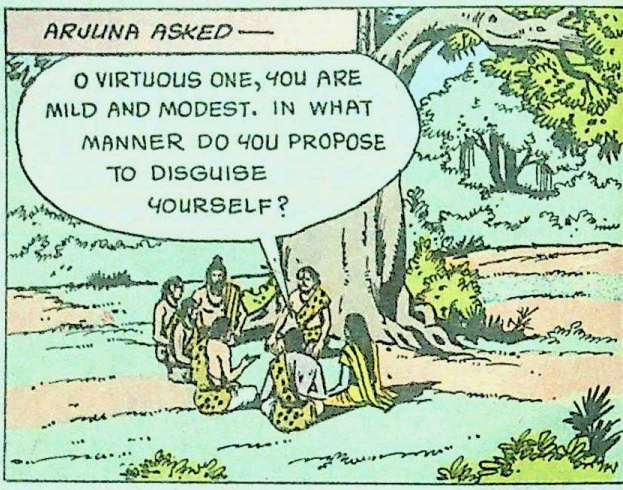

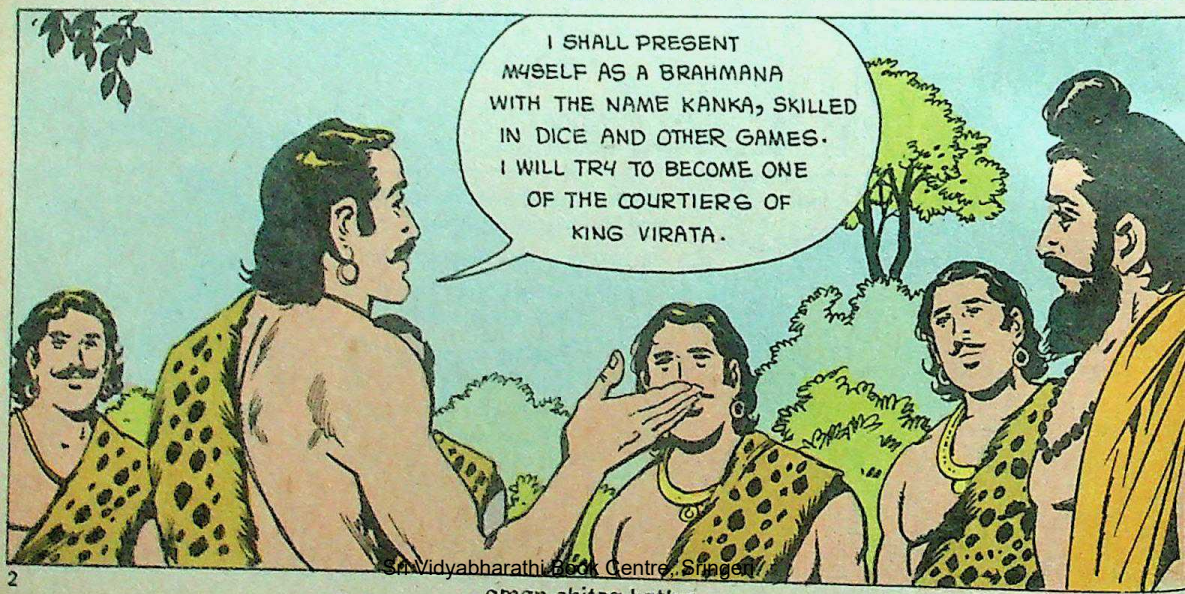

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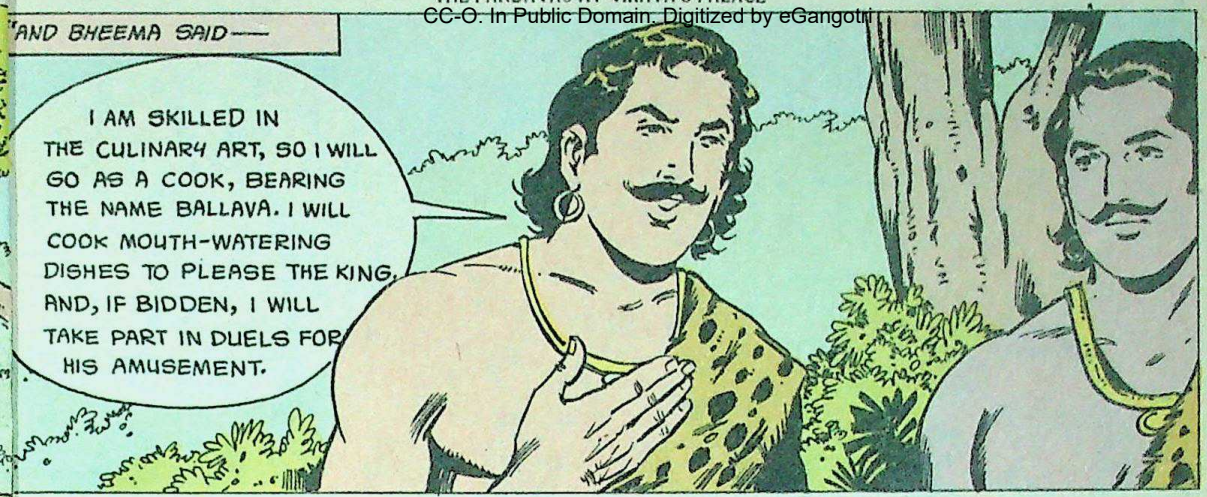

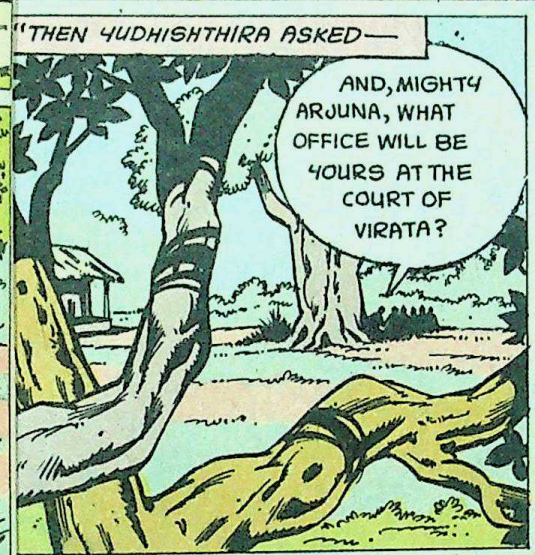

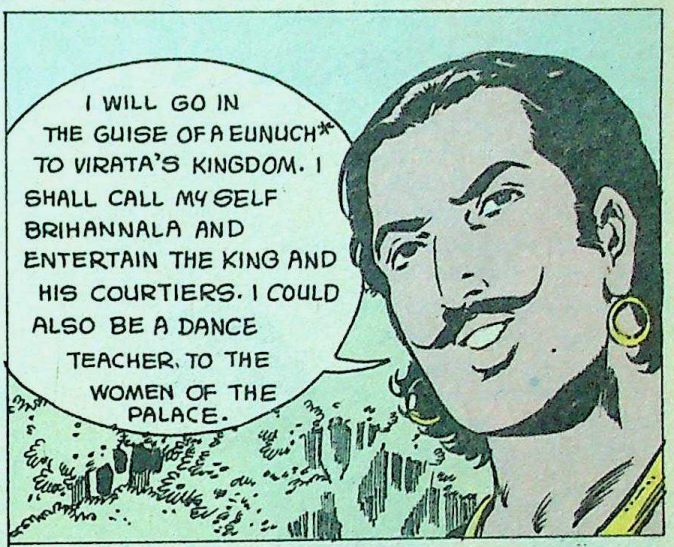

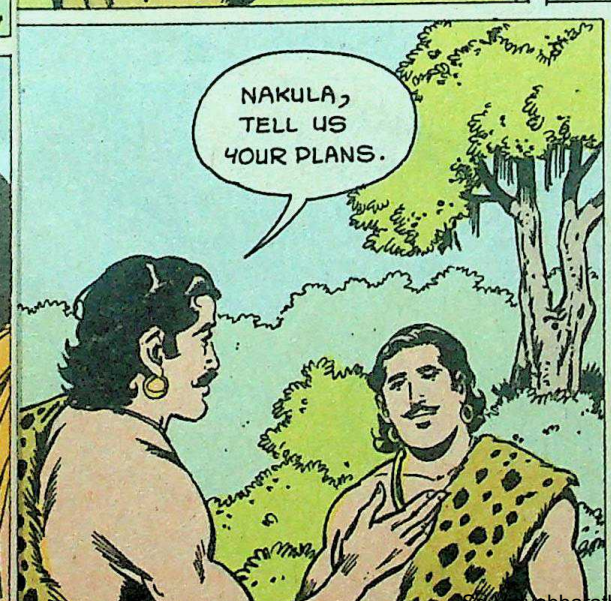

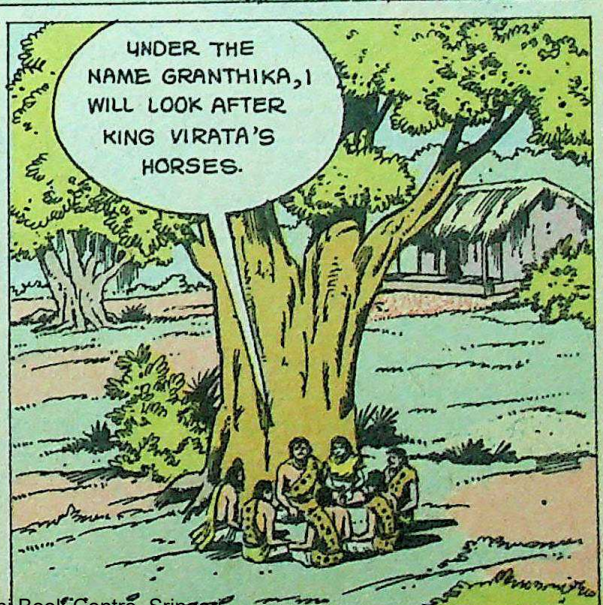

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*ARJUNA HAD BEEN CURSED BY URVASHI (MAHABHARATA—21) THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO LIVE BEREFT OF MANHOOD.

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"AND SAHADEVA SAID—

SINCE I AM SKILLED AT MILKING AND TAMING COWS, I WILL LOOK AFTER THE ROYAL HERD. I SHALL CALL MYSELF TANTIPALA.

"TURNING TO DRAUPADI, YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—

AND OUR BELOVED WIFE DRAUPADI, HOW AND WHERE WILL YOU LIVE?

"DRAUPADI REPLIED—

MY LORD, THERE IS A CLASS OF VIRTUOUS WOMEN CALLED SAIRANDHRIS. I WILL DRESS AS A SAIRANDHRI AND SERVE KING VIRATA'S WIFE, SUDESHNA. NOBODY WILL RECOGNISE ME IN THAT GUISE.

O FAIR MAIDEN, YOU HAVE SPOKEN WEL CONDUCT YOURSELF THERE IN SUCH A WAY THAT OUR ENEMIES NEVER RECOGNISE YOU.

"THEN YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—

WE HAVE DECIDED WHAT COURSE OF ACTION WE WILL BE TAKING. LET THE SAGES AND PRIESTS REPAIR TO THE ABODE OF DRUPADA AND MAINTAIN THE AGNIHOTRA FIRES. AND LET DRAUPADI'S MAID-SERVANTS GO TO THE PANCHALA KINGDOM. AND IF ASKED, ANSWER—WE DO NOT KNOW WHERE THE PANDAVAS HAVE GONE, AFTER LEAVING US AT DWAITAVANA.

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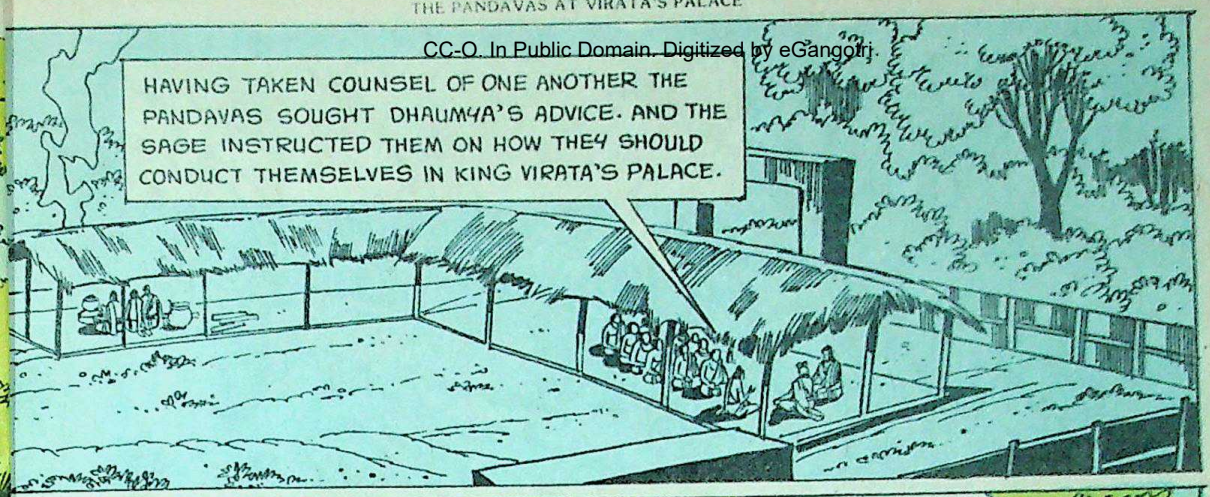

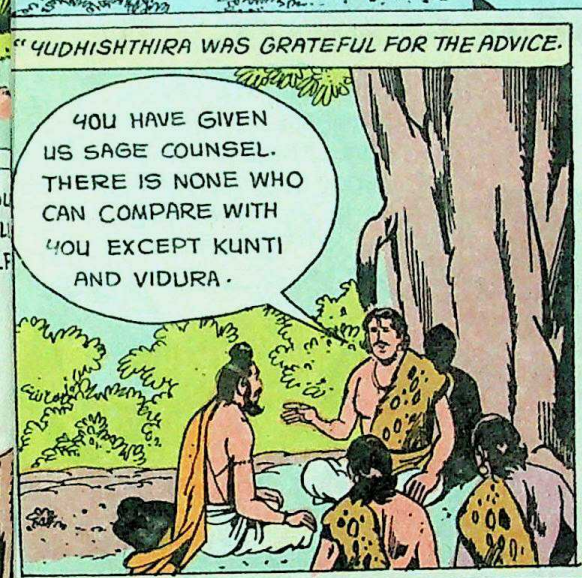

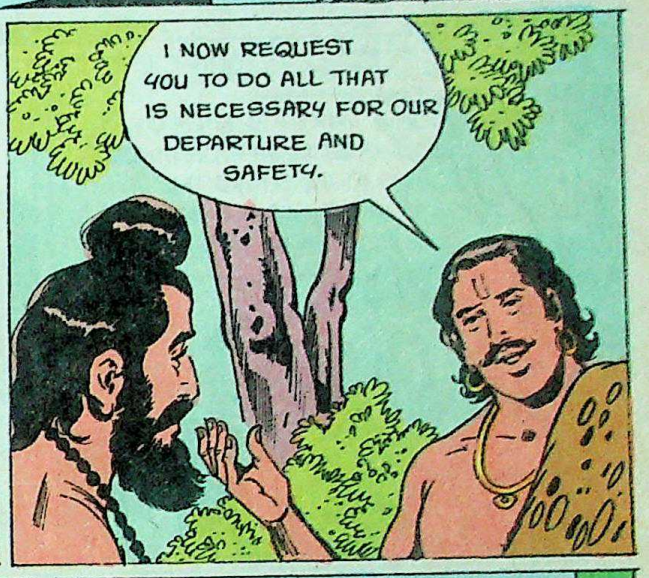

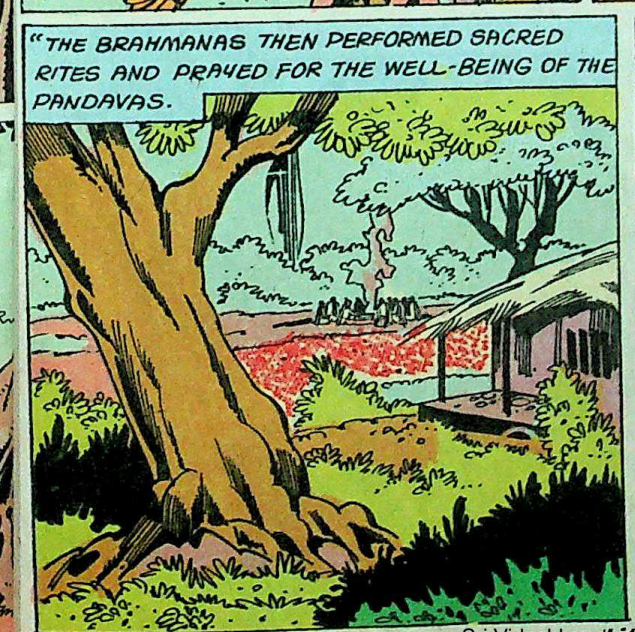

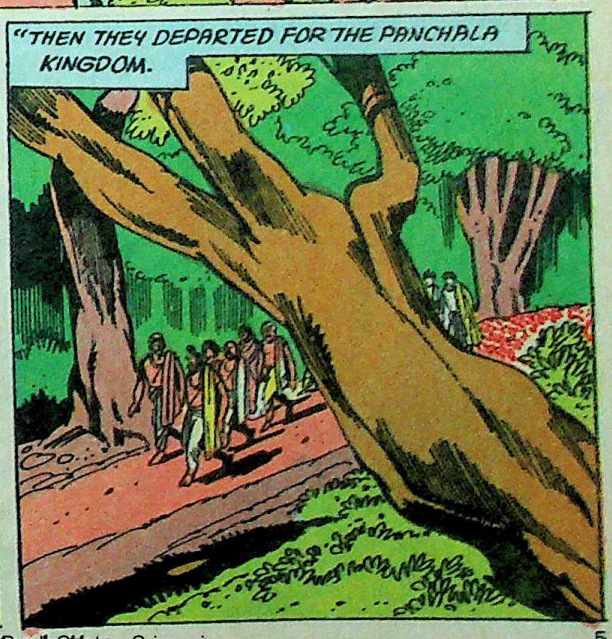

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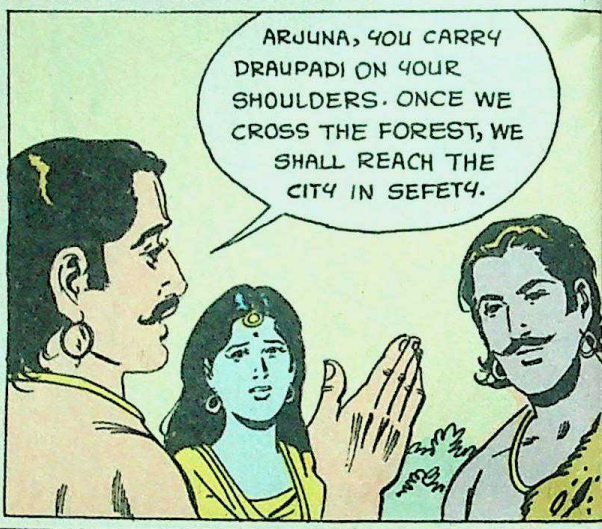

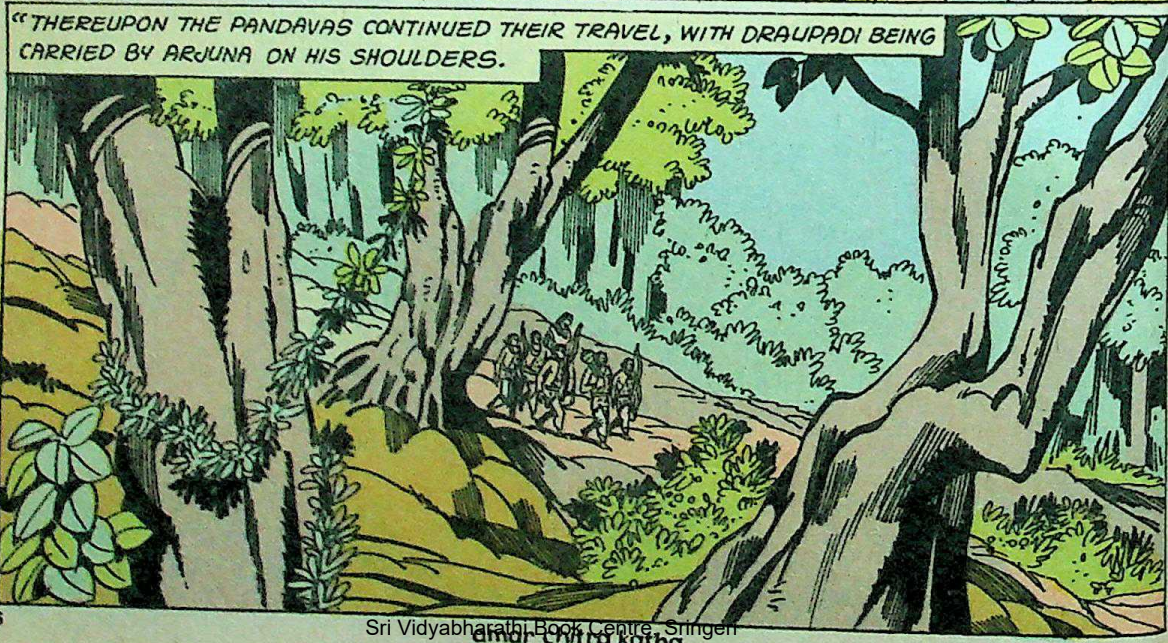

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"ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY, YUDHISHTHIRA ADDRESSED ARJUNA—

WHERE WILL WE HIDE OUR WEAPONS? IF WE ENTER WITH SO MANY WEAPONS IT WILL SURELY CAUSE ALARM AMONG THE CITIZENS. MOREOVER, THE GANDEEVA* IS KNOWN BY ALL, AND SO PEOPLE WILL SOON RECOGNISE US...

"ARJUNA SAID—

O YUDHISHTHIRA, THERE IS IN THAT DENSE FOREST ABOUNDING IN BEASTS AND SNAKES, A DESOLATE CREMATION GROUND. IN THAT GROUND STANDS A MIGHTY SHAMI TREE...

...AND IF WE ARE DISCOVERED, WE SHALL HAVE, ACCORDING TO OUR PROMISE, TO PASS ANOTHER TWELVE YEARS IN THE FOREST.

...WITH GIGANTIC BRANCHES. I WILL GO UP THE TREE AND CONCEAL OUR WEAPONS AMONG THE INACCESSIBLE BRANCHES OF THE TREE. LATER WE WILL GO AND LIVE IN THE CITY WITHOUT ANY ANXIETY!

* ARJUNA'S BOW

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THEREAFTER THE PANDAVAS DIVESTED THEMSELVES OF THEIR WEAPONS. THE MIGHTY CELESTIAL WEAPONS WERE GATHERED AND TAKEN TO THE CREMATION GROUND IN THE FOREST.

"NAKULA ASCENDED THE TREE AND SECURED THE WEAPONS TO THE BRANCHES WHICH WERE STRONG AND WHICH COULD RESIST RAIN AND WIND.

"THE PANDAVAS THEN HUNG FROM THE TREE A FOUL-SMELLING CARCASS TO DETER PEOPLE FROM APPROACHING THE TREE...

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"SATISFIED WITH THEIR WORK, THEY TURNED TOWARDS THE KINGDOM OF VIRATA.

YUDHISHTHIRA'S MIND WAS FULL OF PRAISES OF THE GODDESS DURGA.

"HE AND HIS BROTHERS TOGETHER WITH DRAUPADI, DESIROUS OF OBTAINING A VISION OF THE GODDESS, INVOKED HER BY RECITING VARIOUS HYMNS.

O MOTHER, GRANT ME PROTECTION.

"PRAISED BY THE SONS OF PANDU, THE GODDESS APPEARED BEFORE THEM.

O MIGHTY KING, THROUGH MY GRACE YOU SHALL SLAY THE KAURAVAS AND VICTORY SHALL BE YOURS.

YOU SHALL RULE OVER THE EARTH ONCE MORE AND JOY AND HEALTH WILL BE YOURS. AND THROUGH MY GRACE NEITHER THE KURU SPIES NOR THOSE THAT DWELL IN THE COUNTRY OF THE MATSYAS WILL SUCCEED IN RECOGNISING YOU ALL AS LONG AS YOU RESIDE IN VIRATA'S CITY.

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AFTER THIS, THE PANDAVAS WENT IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS, EACH TO TAKE UP HIS NEW SERVICE FOR THE PERIOD OF ONE YEAR.

"YUDHISHTHIRA WRAPPED HIS DICE OF GOLD IN A PIECE OF CLOTH AND PROCEEDED TOWARDS THE COURT OF VIRATA.

"AT THE COURT, KING VIRATA WAS VERY IMPRESSED BY YUDHISHTHIRA'S APPEARANCE.

ENQUIRE WHO THAT MAN IS. HE CANNOT BE A BRAHMANA. HIS PROUD AND CONFIDENT BEARING SUGGESTS THAT HE IS SOME KING.

"WHILE VIRATA WAS TALKING TO HIS MINISTER, YUDHISHTHIRA APPROACHED HIM—

O MIGHTY KING, I AM A POOR BRAHMANA WHO WISHES TO SEEK SHELTER IN YOUR ABODE. I WISH TO LIVE HERE UNDER YOUR GUIDANCE AND PROTECTION.

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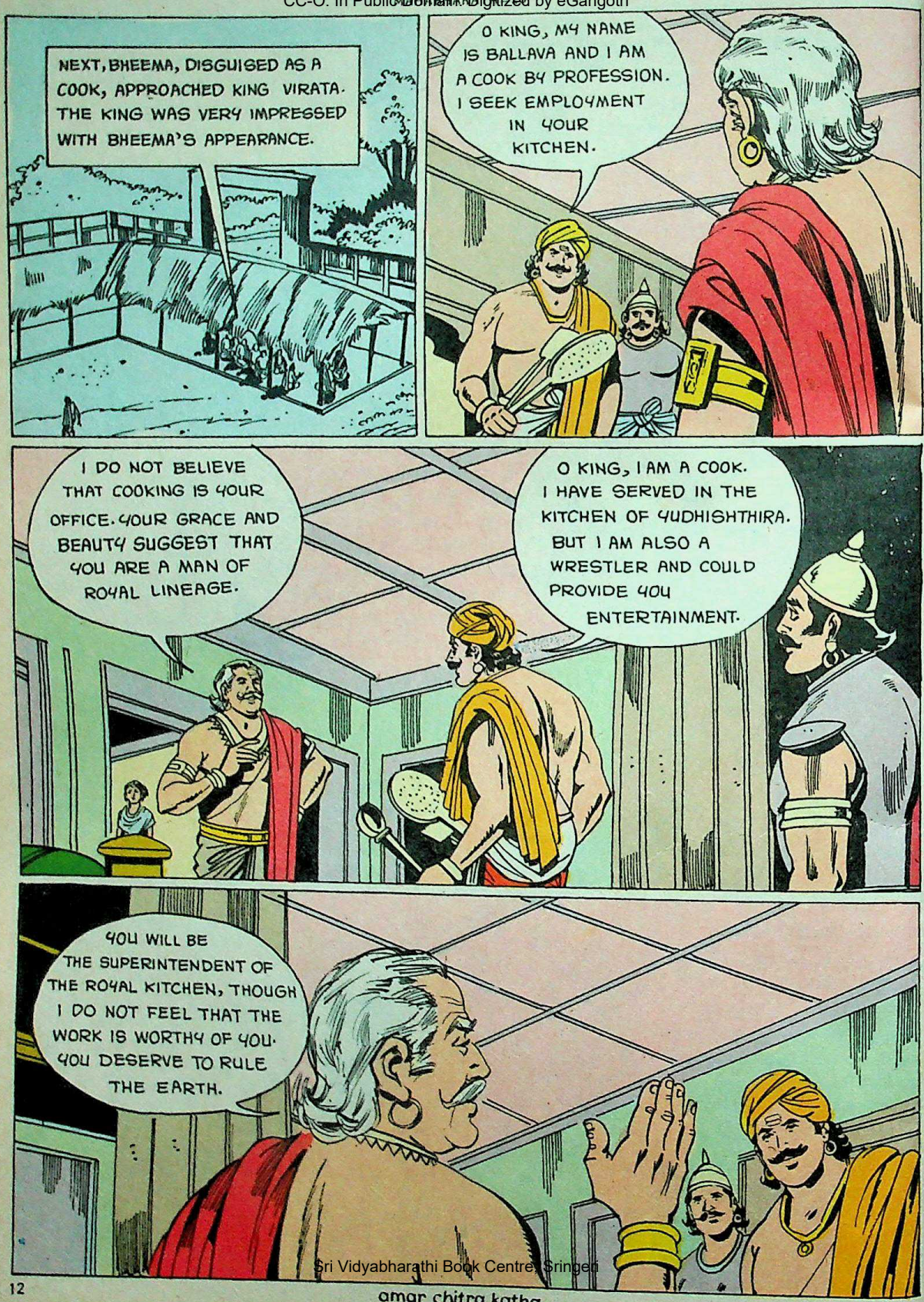

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"WHILE THE BROTHERS WERE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT WITH THE KING, DRAUPADI WANDERED THE STREETS OF THE CITY, WEARING A HARASSED LOOK.

WHO ARE YOU?

WHAT DO YOU SEEK?

"SHE REPLIED —

I AM A KING'S SAIRANDHRI. I WISH TO SERVE ANYONE WHO WILL MAINTAIN ME.

"BUT PEOPLE TURNED AWAY —

SHE IS TOO BEAUTIFUL TO BE A MAID.

HER SPEECH SUGGESTS SHE IS FROM A ROYAL FAMILY.

"SOON DRAUPADI PASSED THE PALACE OF KING VIRATA'S FAVOURITE QUEEN SUDESHNA. THE QUEEN WAS ON THE TERRACE WHEN SHE BEHELD A FORLORN MAID ON THE STREETS. SHE ADDRESSED HER —

O BEAUTIFUL ONE, WHO ARE YOU? AND WHAT DO YOU SEEK?

I AM A SAIRANDHRI, O QUEEN. I WILL SERVE ANYBODY WHO WILL MAINTAIN ME.

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*LITERALLY MEANS MAKER OF GARLANDS.

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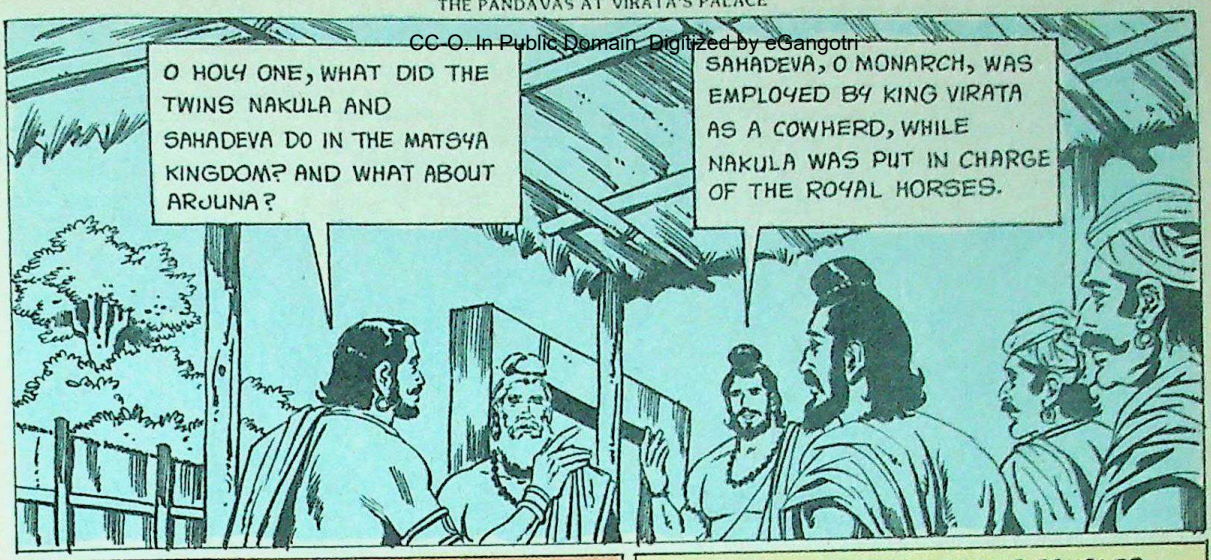

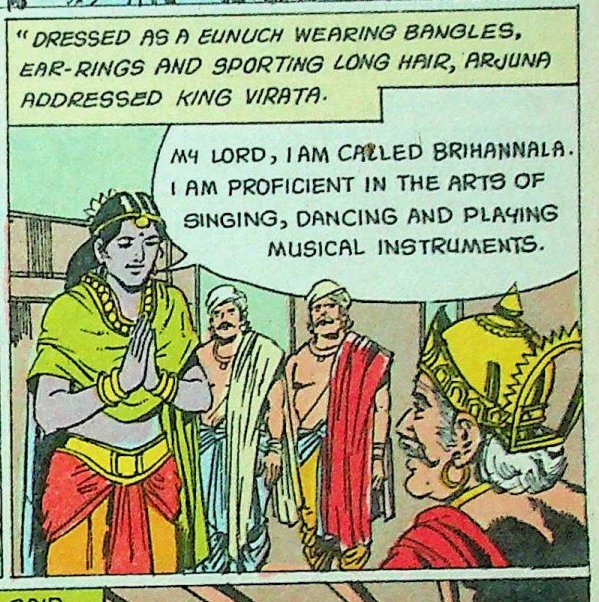

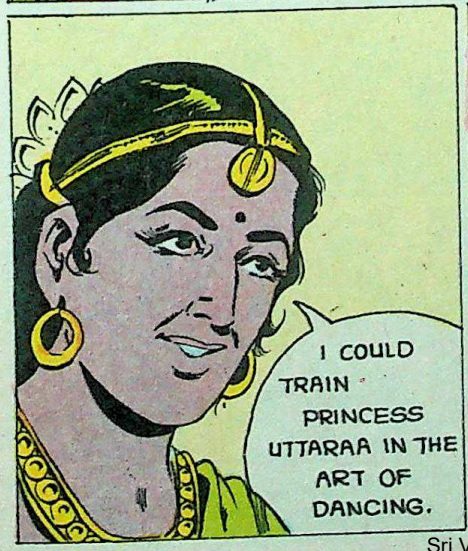

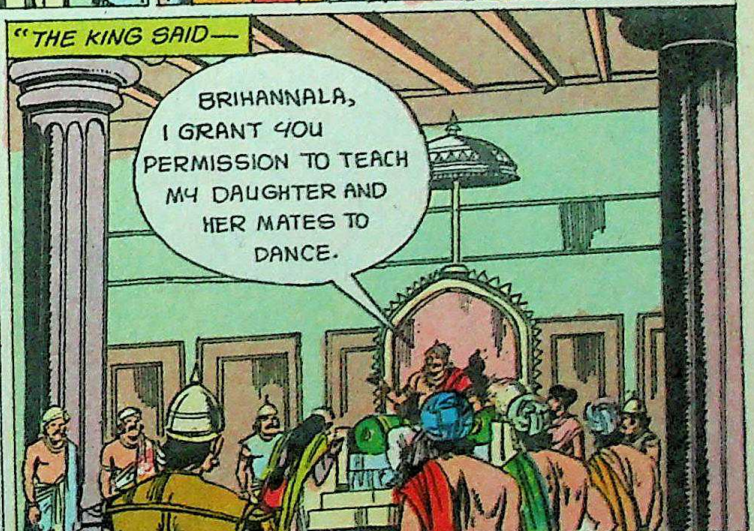

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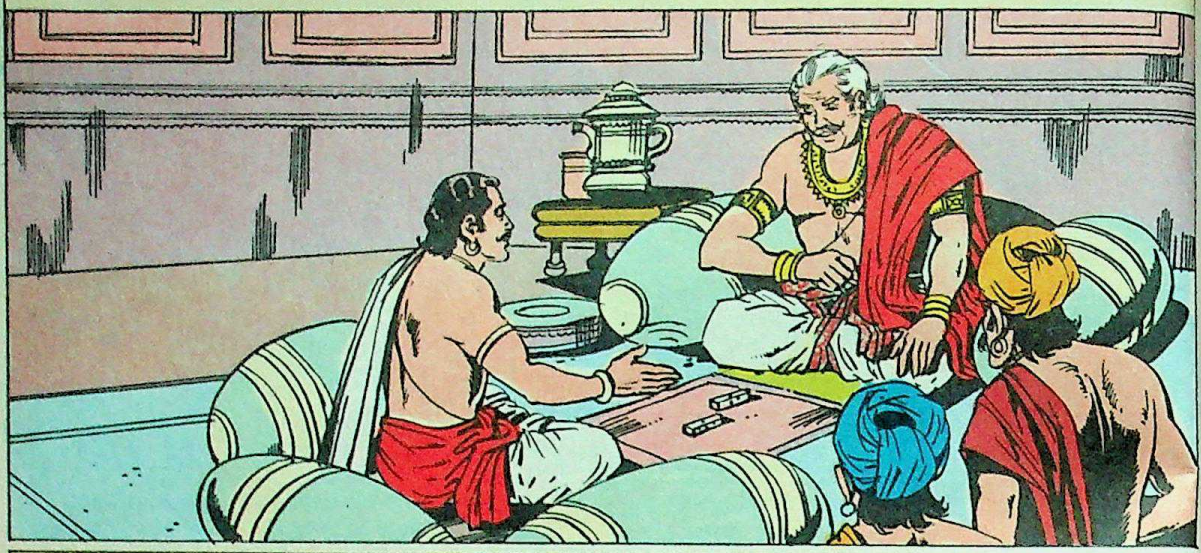
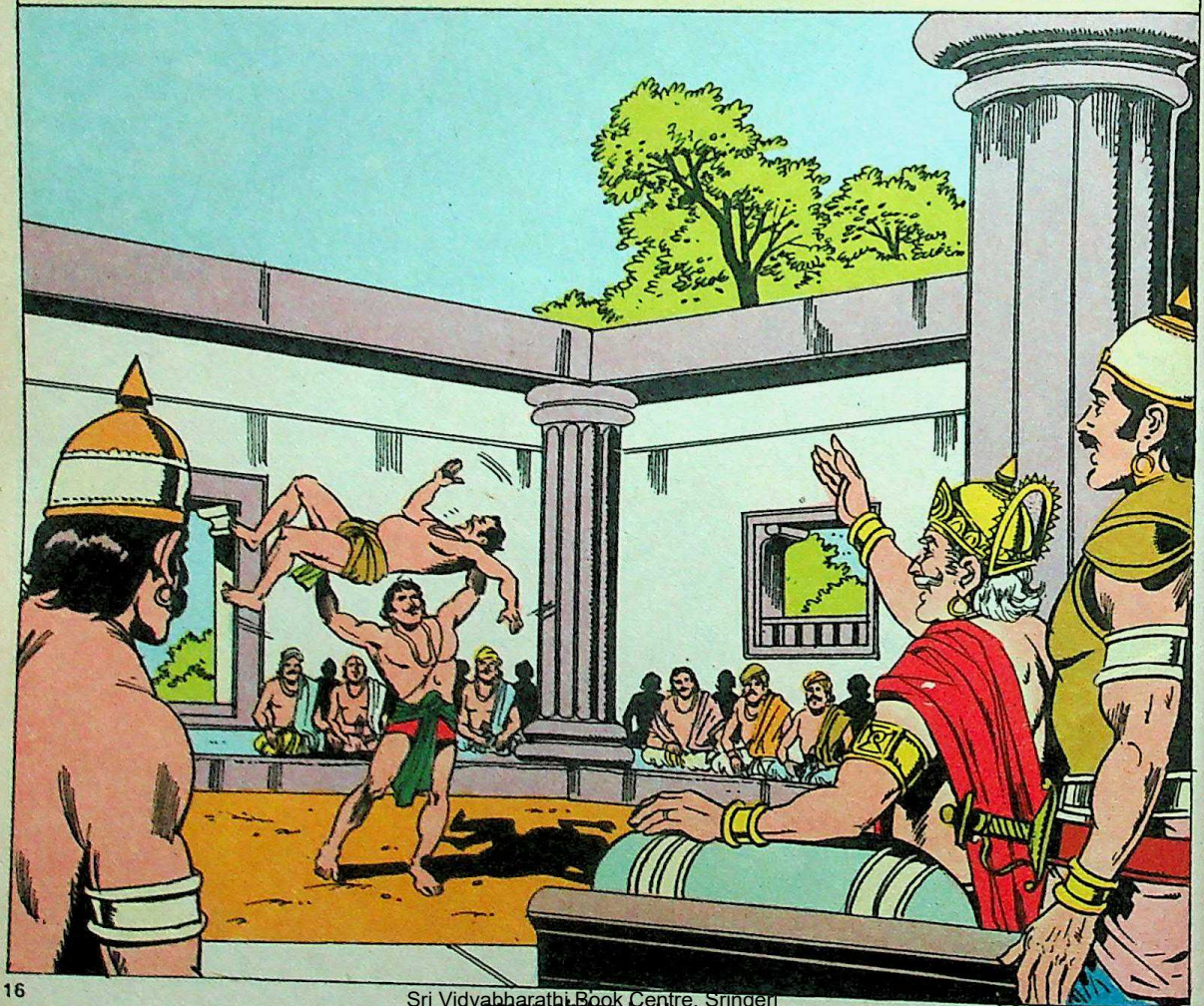
"LIVING IN DISGUISE, THE PANDAVAS PERFORMED THE DUTIES ASSIGNED TO THEM. THUS YUDHISHTHIRA ENTERTAINED THE KING AND HIS COURTIERS WITH THE GAME OF DICE.



"BHEEMA, WHEN HE WASN'T COOKING, PROVIDED EXCITEMENT TO SPECTATORS IN THE ARENA.



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"THUS THE PANDAVAS PASSED TEN MONTHS IN DISGUISE IN THE KINGDOM OF MATSYA. IT WAS ONE DAY THEREAFTER THAT KEECHAKA, THE COMMANDER OF VIRATA'S FORCES, CHANCED TO BEHOLD DRAUPADI.

WHO IS THAT BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN? I HAVE NEVER SEEN HER BEFORE.

"HE APPROACHED HIS SISTER QUEEN SUDESHNA.

WHO IS THE BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN I SAW IN YOUR CHAMBER?

SHE IS A SAIRANDHRI. SHE LOOKS AFTER MY NEEDS.

"SMITTEN BY HER BEAUTY, KEECHAKA ONE DAY APPROACHED DRAUPADI.

TELL ME, O FAIR MAIDEN, WHO ARE YOU? WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM?

LET ME BE YOUR SLAVE. I WILL FORSAKE ALL MY WIVES AND BE ATTACHED TO YOU ALONE. ALLOW ME TO BE OF SERVICE TO YOU.

"DRAUPADI REPLIED—

I AM A MERE MAID AND IT IS NOT PROPER THAT A MAN OF YOUR HONOUR SHOULD SPEAK TO ME THUS. MOREOVER, I AM A MARRIED LADY.

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"BUT THIS DID NOT DAMPEN KEECHAKA'S ARDOUR.

LADY, DO NOT DISREGARD ME. I AM THE REAL LORD OF THIS KINGDOM. THERE IS NOT ANOTHER MAN ON EARTH TO RIVAL ME.

IF YOU ACCEPT MY OFFER YOU CAN ENJOY THE BEST OF WORLDLY PLEASURES.

BEWARE, I AM DEAR TO MY FIVE GANDHARVA HUSBANDS. AND IF THEY ARE ENRAGED THEY WILL KILL YOU. THEN EVEN IF YOU CONCEAL YOURSELF INSIDE THE EARTH OR ESCAPE SOARING INTO THE SKY THERE WILL BE NO ESCAPE FROM THE ANGER OF THESE MIGHTY GANDHARVAS.

"KEECHAKA THEN WENT TO HIS SISTER AND SPOKE TO HER THUS—

O SUDESHNA, I CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT YOUR SAIRANDHRI. PLEASE DEVISE A MEANS SO THAT SHE WILL COME TO ME.

DEAR BROTHER, THE SAIRANDHRI IS UNDER MY PROTECTION AND IT DOES NOT BEHOVE ME TO BETRAY HER. AND IT WOULD BE FOR YOUR OWN GOOD TO LEAVE HER ALONE, OR ELSE HER MIGHTY GANDHARVA HUSBANDS WILL KILL YOU.

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"AFTER A LOT OF PERSUASION, SUDESHNA FINALLY GAVE IN.

I SHALL SEND MY SAIRANDHRI TO YOUR CHAMBER ON SOME PRETEXT. YOU CAN HUMOUR HER THERE, FREE FROM INTERRUPTION.

WHEN KEECHAKA LEFT, SUDESHNA CALLED DRAUPADI.

GO TO KEECHAKA'S CHAMBER AND GET ME SOME WINE. I AM VERY THIRSTY.

"DRAUPADI WAS FRIGHTENED—

O QUEEN, DO NOT SEND ME ON ANY ERRAND TO KEECHAKA. HE IS SURE TO MOLEST ME. YOU HAVE MANY OTHER MAIDS. SEND ONE OF THEM.

DO NOT FEAR. SENT BY ME, HE WILL NOT DARE TO HARM YOU.

THE HELPLESS DRAUPADI THEN PRAYED TO SURYA FOR PROTECTION. AND SURYA COMMANDED A RAKSHASA TO PROTECT HER INVISIBLY, ALL THE TIME.

"IN KEECHAKA'S CHAMBER, DRAUPADI STOOD TREMBLING BEFORE HIM.

WELCOME, O BEAUTIFUL SAIRANDHRI. COME, SIT BY ME AND DRINK SOME WINE.

THE QUEEN HAS SENT ME TO YOU FOR SOME WINE.

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"TAKING HOLD OF DRAUPADI'S HAND, KEECHAKA SAID—

THE QUEEN'S ORDERS WILL BE CARRIED OUT BY SOME OTHER PERSON. YOU STAY WITH ME.

"FREEING HERSELF FROM HIM, DRAUPADI EXCLAIMED—

O SINNER! NEVER EVEN IN MY MIND HAVE I BEEN DISLOYAL TO MY HUSBANDS. YOU WILL REMAIN BOUND BY THE TRUTH OF MY FAITHFULNESS. AND LISTEN, YOU WILL RUE THIS ACT OF YOURS AND WILL BE DRAGGED ON THE GROUND BY YOUR ENEMY.

"SENSING HER ANGER, KEECHAKA TRIED TO GRAB HOLD OF DRAUPADI. BUT TREMBLING WITH RAGE, SHE DASHED HIM TO THE GROUND AND FLED.

"DRAUPADI CAME RUSHING TO THE COURT OF VIRATA WHERE THE KING WAS PLAYING A GAME OF DICE WITH YUDHISHTHIRA. KEECHAKA CAME RUNNING AFTER HER AND KICKED HER IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL.

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"THEREUPON, THE INVISIBLE RAKSHASA APPOINTED BY SURYA TO PROTECT DRAUPADI, GAVE KEECHAKA A MIGHTY BLOW. KEECHAKA FELL DOWN UNCONSCIOUS.

"BHEEMA WHO WAS PRESENT GNASHED HIS TEETH AND WAS READY TO FLY AT THE THROAT OF KEECHAKA. BUT YUDHISHTHIRA, FEARING DISCOVERY, SIGNALLED TO BHEEMA TO CONTROL HIS ANGER.

"BUT DRAUPADI, STILL TREMBLING UNDER THE AFFRONT TO HER WOMANHOOD, TURNED TO KING VIRATA AND SAID—

O KING! YOU HAVE OCCUPIED THE SEAT OF JUSTICE. I AM AN INNOCENT AND WEAK WOMAN. YOU HAVE SEEN KEECHAKA KICKING ME AND TREATING ME LIKE A SLAVE. PROTECT ME FROM THIS EVIL MAN, O KING OF MATSYA.

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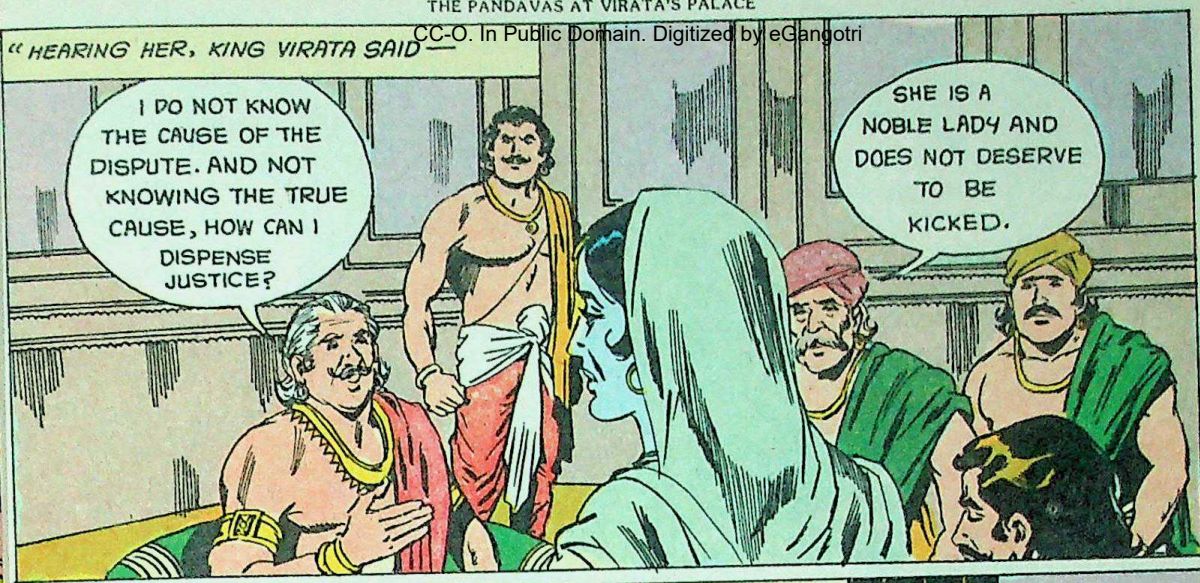

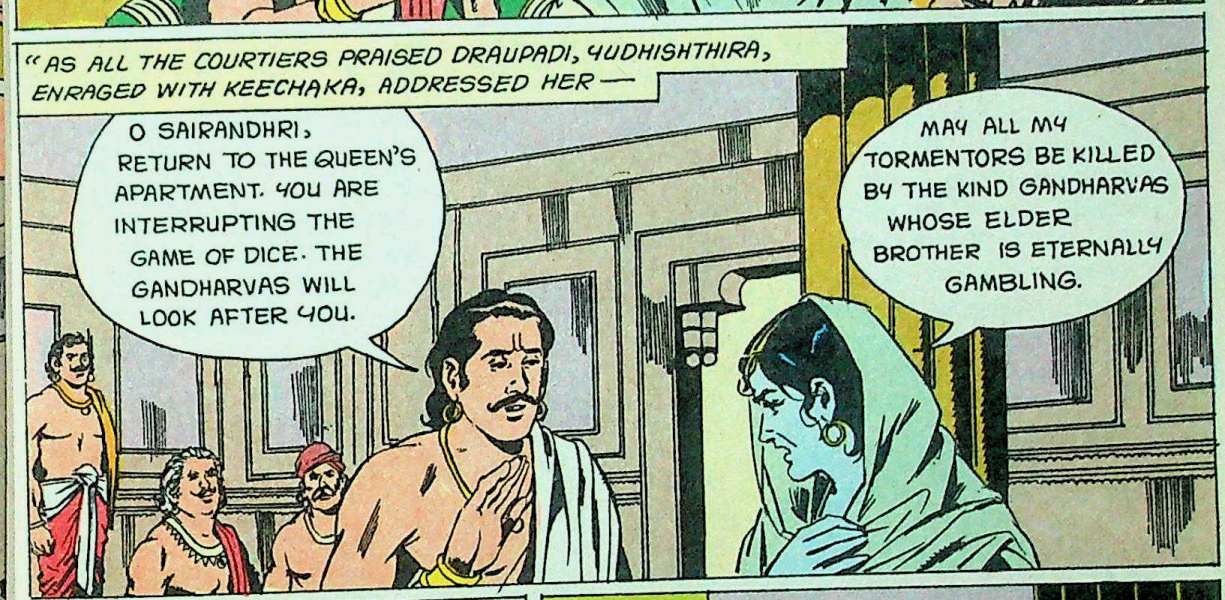

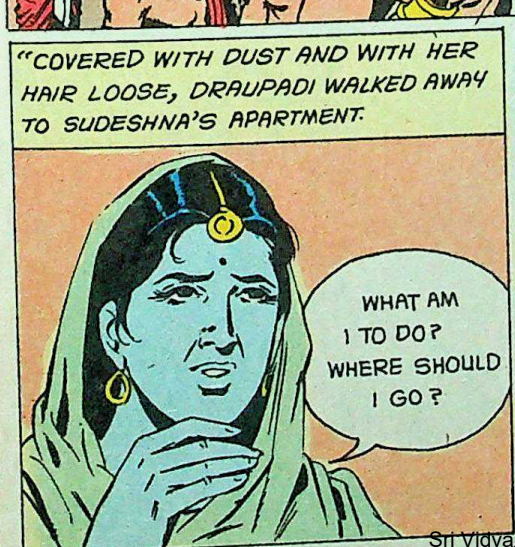

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"THAT NIGHT DRAUPADI WENT TO BHEEMA.

BHEEMA! HOW CAN YOU SLEEP IN PEACE WHEN YOUR WIFE HAS BEEN INSULTED BY THE WICKED WRETCH?

"THUS AWAKENED, BHEEMA ENQUIRED—

WHY ARE YOU SO AGITATED? I WILL DELIVER YOU FROM THE PERIL THAT YOU FACE.

WITH YUDHISHTHIRA FOR A HUSBAND, I WILL NEVER BE FREE FROM GRIEF. THE INSULT HEAPED ON ME AT THE COURT OF THE KURUS AFTER THE GAME OF DICE STILL RANKLES IN ME. WHO ELSE BUT DRAUPADI WOULD LIVE TO SUFFER SUCH MISERY...

...THEN AGAIN THE WICKED JAYADRATHA INSULTED ME IN THE FOREST. AND NOW THE WRETCHED KEECHAKA HAS INSULTED ME. ONLY I COULD BE EXPECTED TO LIVE THROUGH SUCH DISGRACE. IT IS ALL THE FAULT OF THE DESPERATE GAMBLER, YUDHISHTHIRA.

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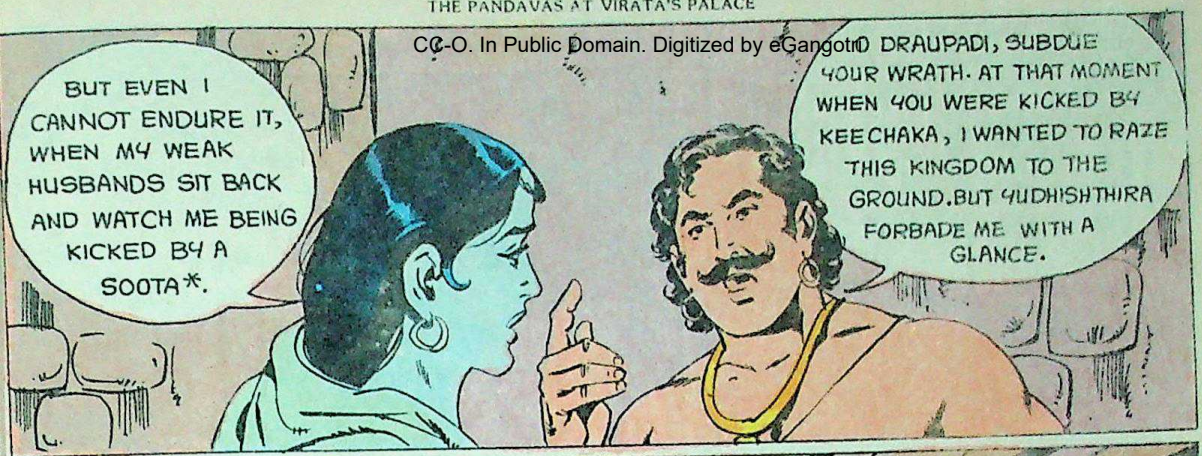

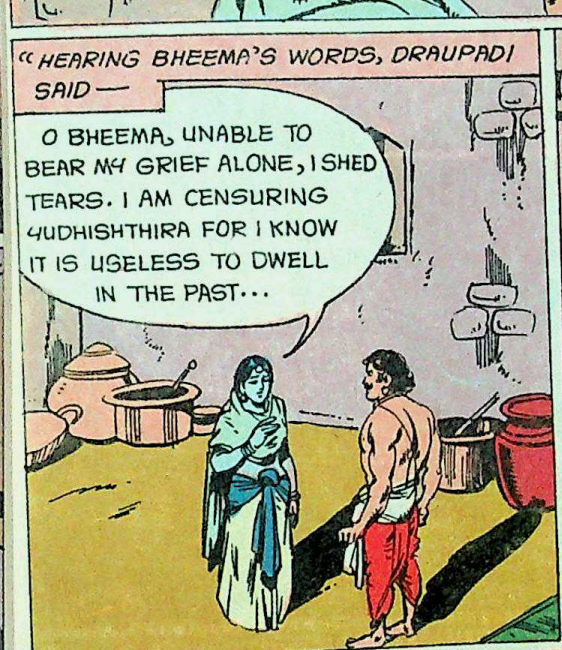

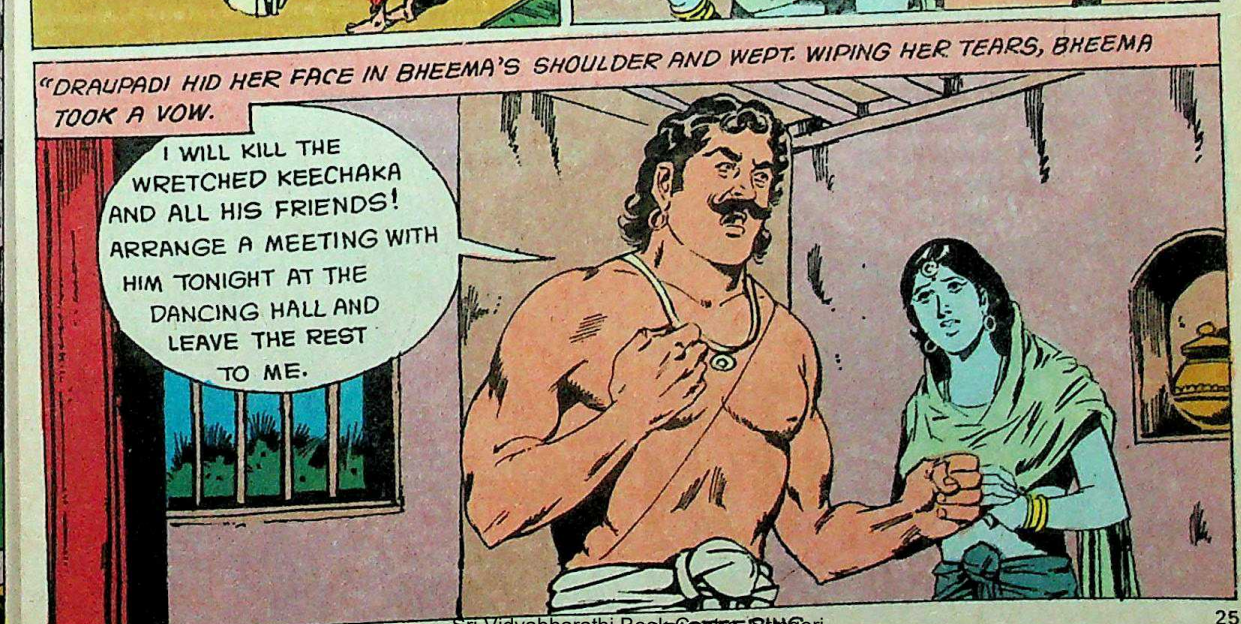

*A CASTE ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION OF CHARIOTEERING.

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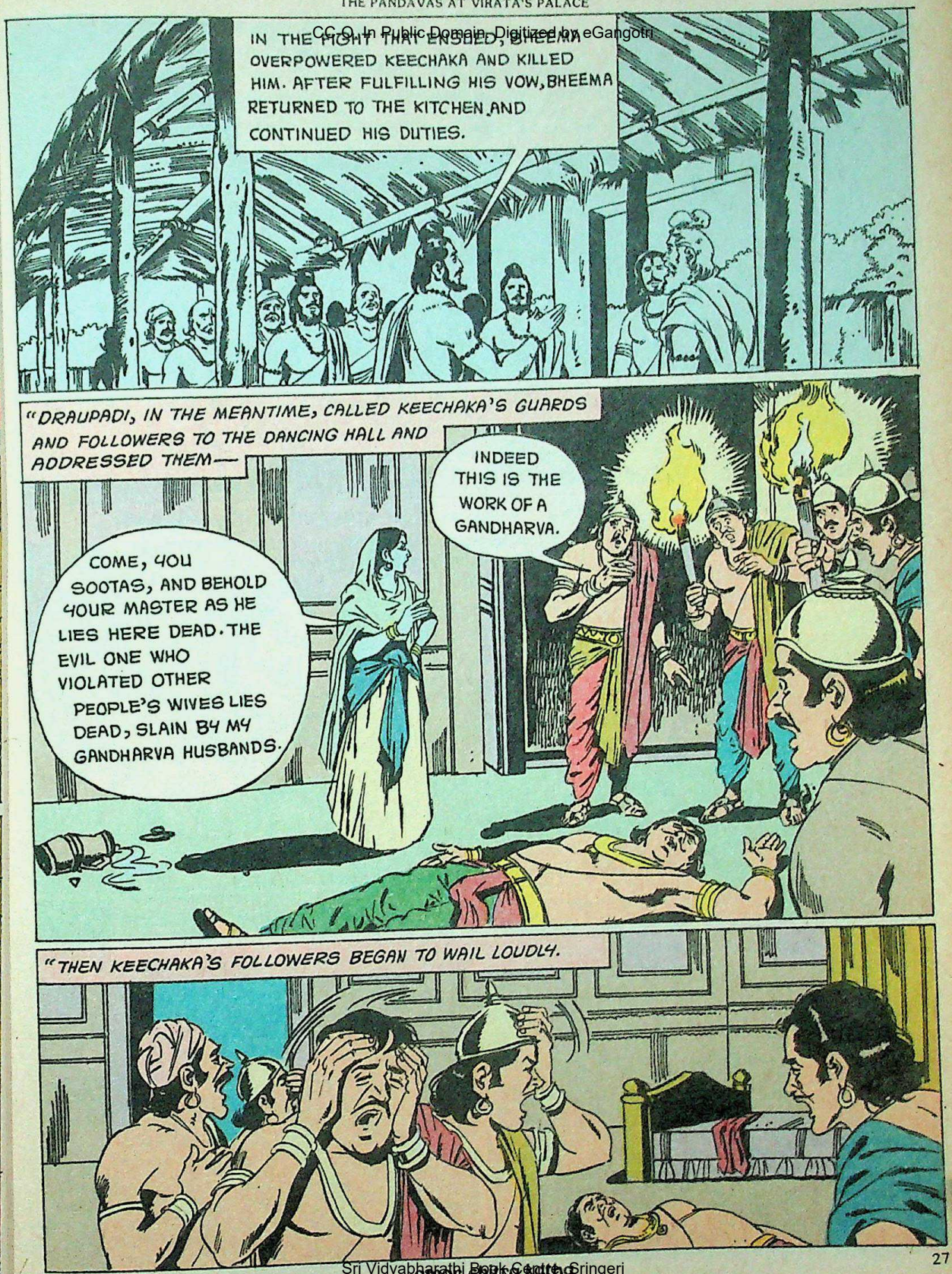

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"SUDDENLY ONE OF THE FOLLOWERS OF KEECHAKA SAID —

IT IS THE FAULT OF THIS UNCHASTE WOMAN THAT KEECHAKA HAS LOST HIS LIFE. LET US CREMATE HER ALONG WITH OUR LORD.

KING VIRATA WAS TOLD OF THE PLANS. HE AGREED, KNOWING THE POWER OF THE SOOTAS. SO A PROCESSION WAS TAKEN OUT TOWARDS THE CREMATION GROUND.

"WHEN BHEEMA HEARD ABOUT THIS, HIS BODY SWELLED WITH RAGE...

"... AFTER CHANGING HIS ATTIRE, HE SECRETLY LET HIMSELF OUT OF THE PALACE AND PROCEEDED TOWARDS THE CREMATION GROUND.

"ON THE WAY HE UPROOTED A MIGHTY TREE AND PLACED IT ON HIS SHOULDER.

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"AT THE CREMATION GROUND BHEEMA RUSHED TOWARDS THE SOOTAS WITH THE TREE TRUNK IN HIS HANDS.

"THE SOOTAS RAN HELTER-SKELTER, SCREAMING.

THE MIGHTY GANDHARVA HAS COME FILLED WITH RAGE. HE WILL KILL US. RUN FOR YOUR LIVES.

SET THE SAIRANDHRI FREE. SET HER FREE.

"AFTER SLAYING THE SOOTAS, BHEEMA FREED DRAUPADI AND CONSOLED HER.

YOU NEED NOT FEAR ANY MORE. RETURN TO THE CITY IN PEACE. I MYSELF WILL GO TO THE KITCHEN BY ANOTHER ROUTE.

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"SAIRANDHRI RETURNED TO THE CITY. ON HEARING OF HER ARRIVAL, THE MAIDENS FROM THE DANCING HALL, ALONG WITH ARJUNA, CAME TO MEET HER.

IT IS GOOD THAT YOUR TORMENTOR HAS BEEN KILLED AND YOU ARE SAFELY BACK WITH US.

"KING VIRATA AND SUDESHNA GOT TO KNOW OF SAIRANDHRI'S ROLE IN THE KILLING OF KEECHAKA.

SAIRANDHRI! WE ARE AFRAID OF THE WRATH OF YOUR GANDHARVA HUSBANDS ON OUR KINGDOM. YOU MAY NOW LEAVE US AND GO WHERE YOU PLEASE.

PLEASE WAIT FOR THIRTEEN MORE DAYS. BY THEN THE GANDHARVAS WILL NOT ONLY HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THEIR TASK, BUT WILL ALSO REPAY YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS.

STAY IF YOU WILL. BUT PROTECT MY HUSBAND AND SONS, I BESEECH YOU.

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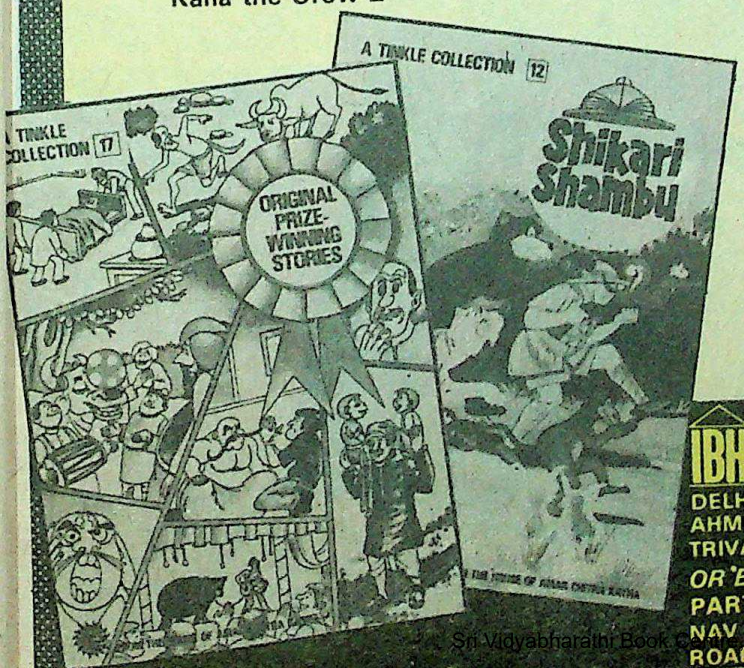

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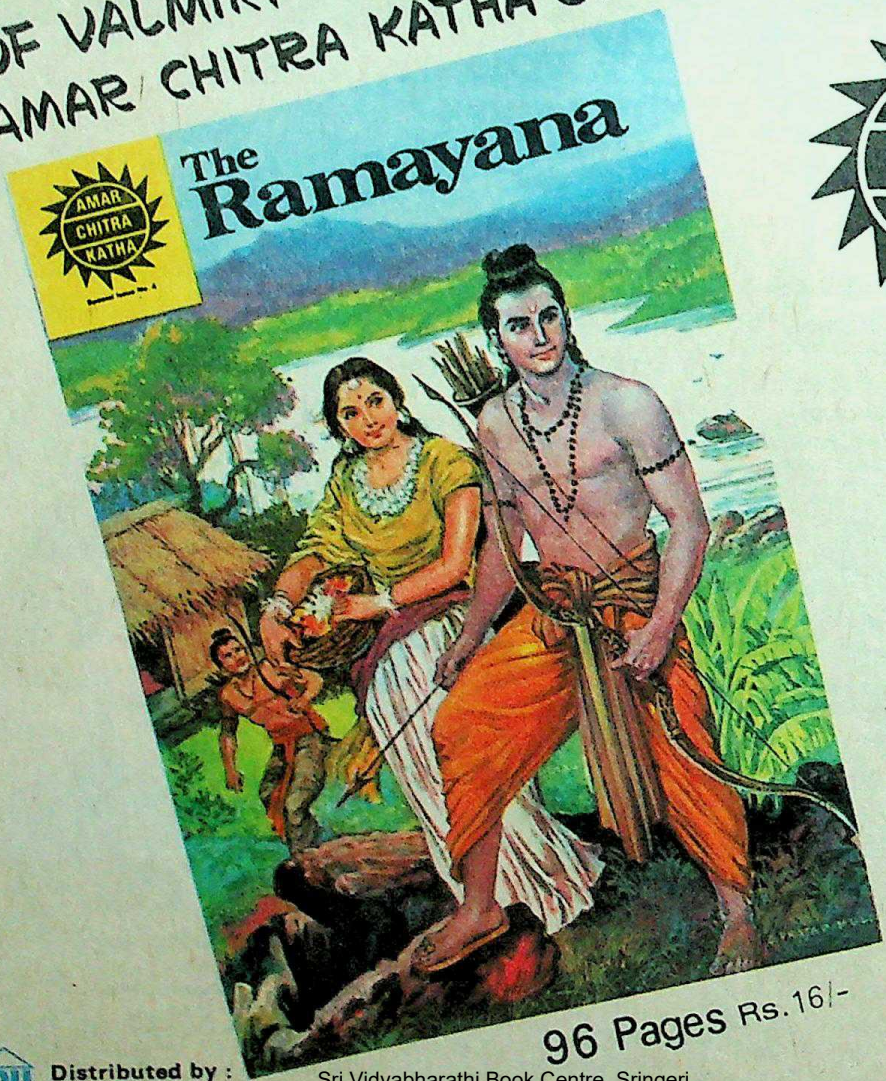

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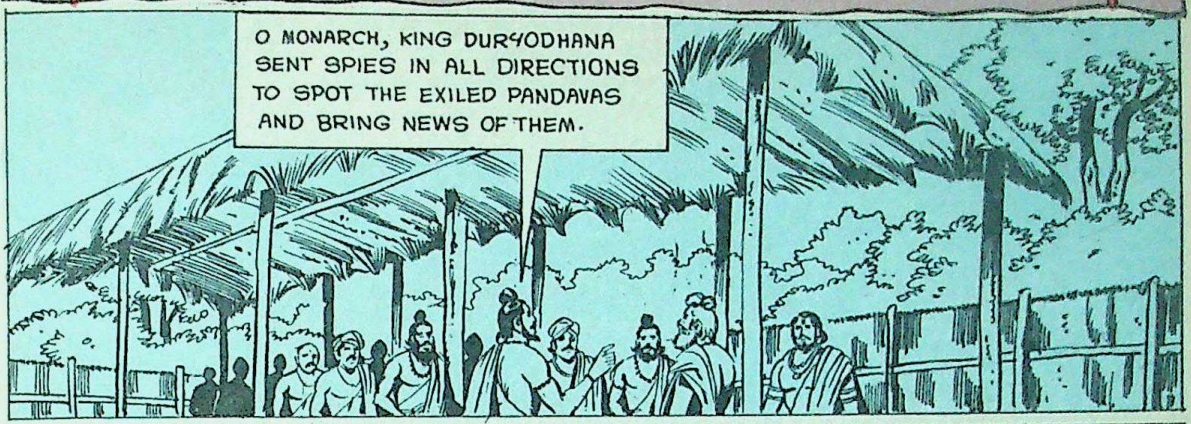
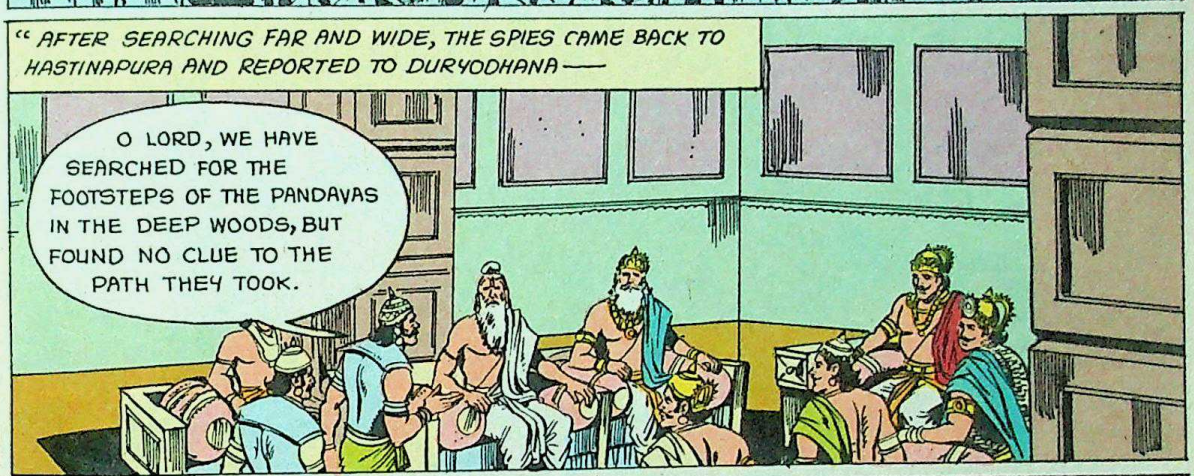
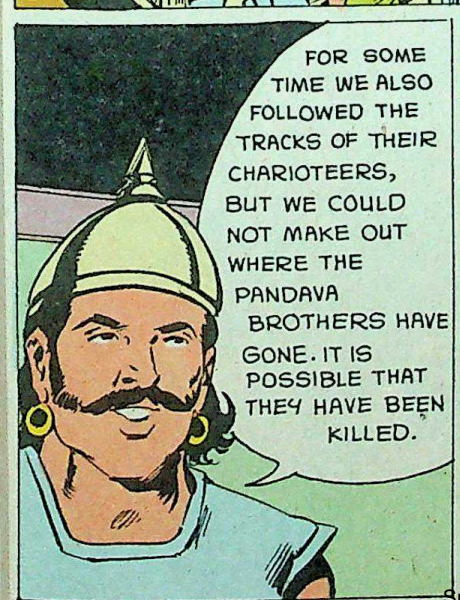
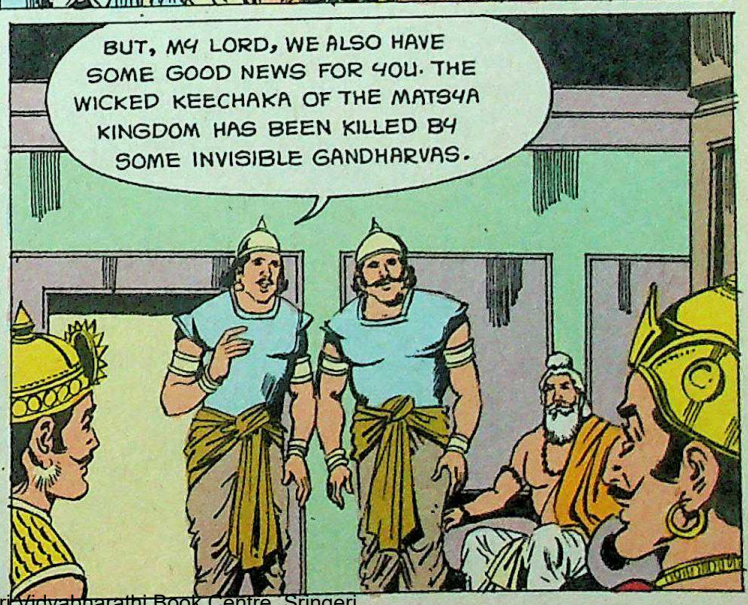
PANIC IN THE KAURAVA CAMP









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INSTRUCT US NOW, O KING, ON WHAT WE MUST DO NEXT.

"A THOUGHTFUL DURYODHANA THEN ADDRESSED HIS COURTIERS.

THE THIRTEENTH YEAR IS COMING TO AN END AND IF THE SONS OF PANDU REMAIN UNDISCOVERED THEY WILL HAVE FULFILLED THEIR PLEDGE. THE ANGRY PANDAVAS WILL THEN UNDOUBTEDLY BECOME A SOURCE OF UNHAPPINESS FOR THE KAURAVAS.

SO TRY AND FIND THEM AT THE EARLIEST SO THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO SUPPRESS THEIR ANGER AND GO INTO EXILE FOR ANOTHER TWELVE YEARS. THIS WILL REMOVE ALL CONFLICTS AND PROBLEMS FROM MY KINGDOM FOR A LONG TIME.

DESPATCH ABLER AND MORE CUNNING SPIES, O KING. LET THEM MAKE DISCREET ENQUIRIES WITH PEOPLE IN CITIES, PILGRIM SPOTS, ASHRAMAS AND ROYAL COURTS. LET THEM ALSO SEARCH IN JUNGLES AND CAVES.

"THEN DUHSHASANA ADDED —

LET US DO AS KARNA SAYS. MAYBE THEY LIVE SKILFULLY CONCEALING THEMSELVES, OR PERHAPS THEY HAVE GONE TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE OCEAN.

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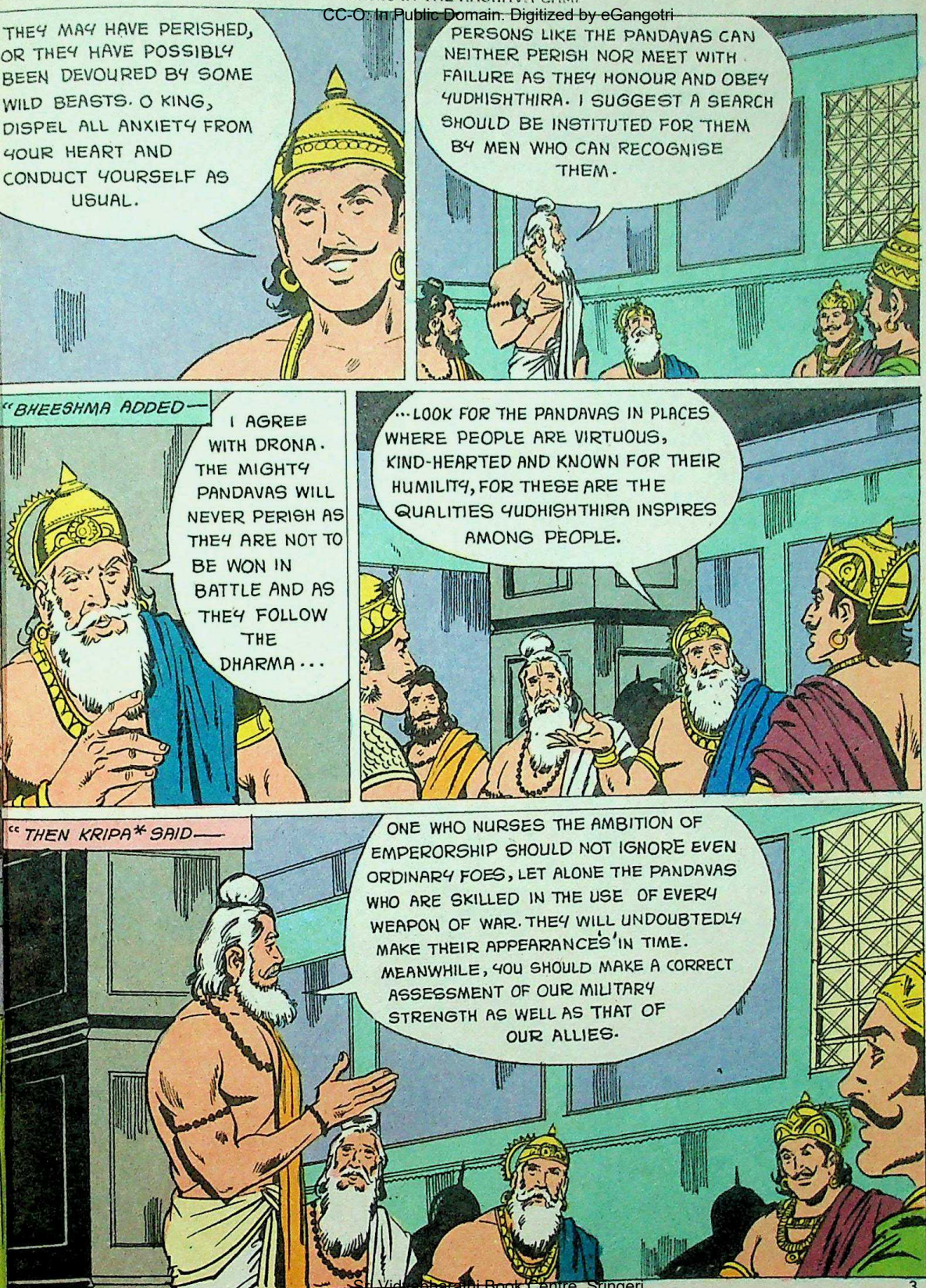

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* DRONACHARYA'S BROTHER-IN-LAW

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"BUT DURYODHANA WAS TROUBLED IN MIND.

KEECHAKA AND HIS BROTHERS HAVE BEEN SLAIN. I BELIEVE THIS IS THE WORK OF NONE OTHER THAN BHEEMA, AND SAIRANDHRI, I BELIEVE, IS DRAUPADI. WE SHOULD NOW LEAD AN EXPEDITION TO MATSYA AND LOOK FOR THE PANDAVAS THERE.

"KING SUSHARMA OF TRIGARTA PROPOSED ——

THE MATSYA ARMY, LED BY KEECHAKA, HAS GIVEN ME TREMENDOUS TROUBLE IN THE PAST. HE HAS BEEN KILLED BY GANDHARVAS NOW.

I SUGGEST THAT THE KAURAVAS SHOULD NOW INVADE THE PROSPEROUS MATSYA KINGDOM FROM THE NORTH. WE SHALL PLUNDER ITS WEALTH AND CATTLE, CONQUER IT AND DIVIDE IT AMONG OURSELVES.

" KARNA WAS PLEASED WITH SUSHARMA'S WORDS.

THE OPPORTUNITY IS FAVOURABLE AND THERE IS THE PROMISE OF GAIN FOR US. LET US MARSHALL OUR FORCES AND PLUNDER THE MATSYA KINGDOM. WE NEED HAVE NO FEAR OF THE PANDAVAS, FOR THEY ARE NOW WITHOUT WEALTH, ARMED STRENGTH AND POWER.

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AGREEING TO THE ADVICE, DURYODHANA INSTRUCTED DUHSHASANA.

SET OUR FORCES IN ARRAY RIGHT NOW AND PREPARE TO MARCH TOWARDS THE MATSYA KINGDOM.

LET THE TRIGARTAS LED BY SUSHARMA PROCEED FIRST AND SEIZE KING VIRATA'S CATTLE. THE KAURAVA ARMY WILL SET OUT ON THE FOLLOWING DAY.

THEN, O LORD, SUSHARMA AND THE TRIGARTAS MARCHED TOWARDS THE MATSYA KINGDOM AND SEIZED THE CATTLE OF THE LAND. A DAY LATER THE KAURAVA ARMY ATTACKED THE NORTHERN END.

MEANWHILE ON KEECHAKA'S DEATH, KING VIRATA HAD BEGUN TO REGARD YUDHISHTHIRA WITH GREAT RESPECT AND HAD PINNED GREAT HOPES ON HIM.

"SO ONE DAY WHEN KING VIRATA'S COURT WAS IN SESSION—

O KING, THE SOLDIERS OF TRIGARTA ARE LIFTING OUR CATTLE BY A HUNDRED AND THOUSAND HEAD. PLEASE RESCUE THEM AT ONCE.

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"KING VIRATA HASTILY GATHERED TOGETHER HIS BRAVE SOLDIERS AND PRINCES. AND, AS THE CHARIOTS WERE BEING YOKED, VIRATA SAID TO HIS BROTHER SHATANEEKA —

SHATANEEKA, I AM CONVINCED THAT KANKA, BALLAVA, TANTIPALA AND GRANTHIKA CAN ALSO JOIN IN THE BATTLE. GIVE THEM CHARIOTS FURNISHED WITH BANNERS, COATS OF MAIL AND WEAPONS.

I WILL.

"THE PANDAVAS THUS JOINED THE ARMY.

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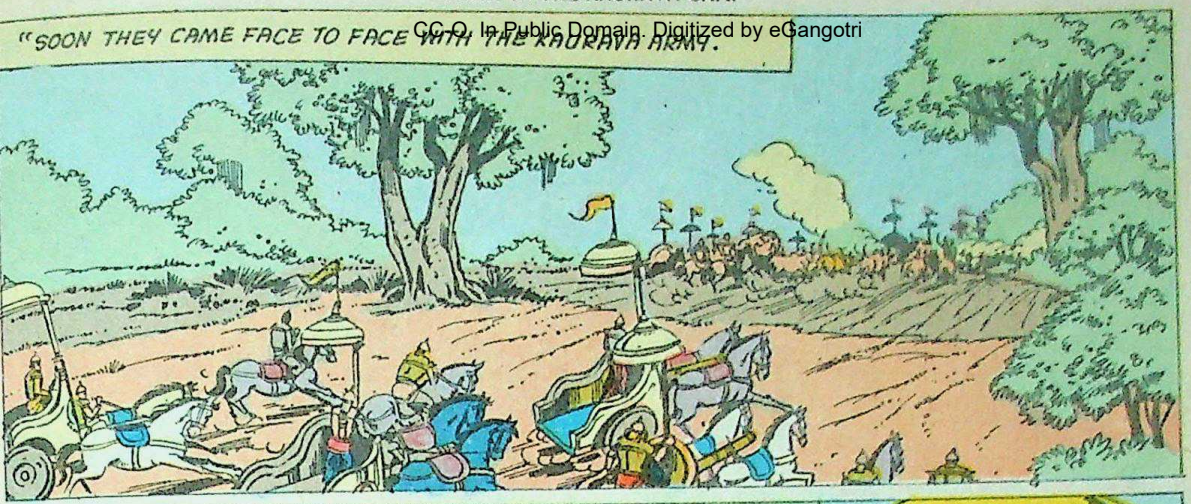

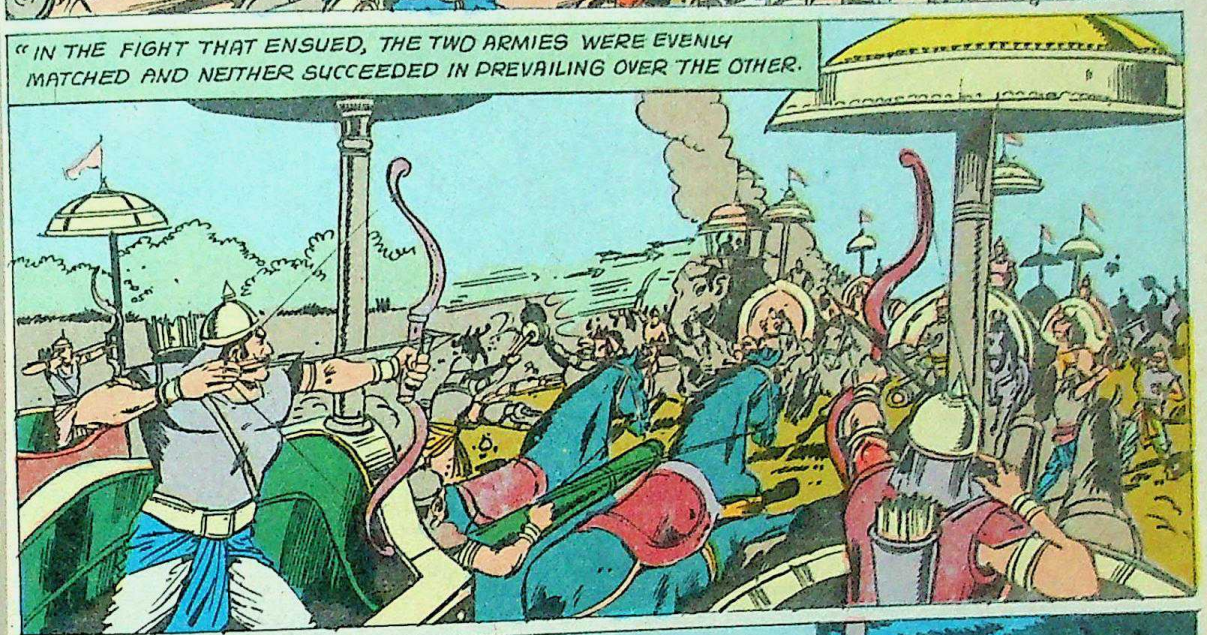

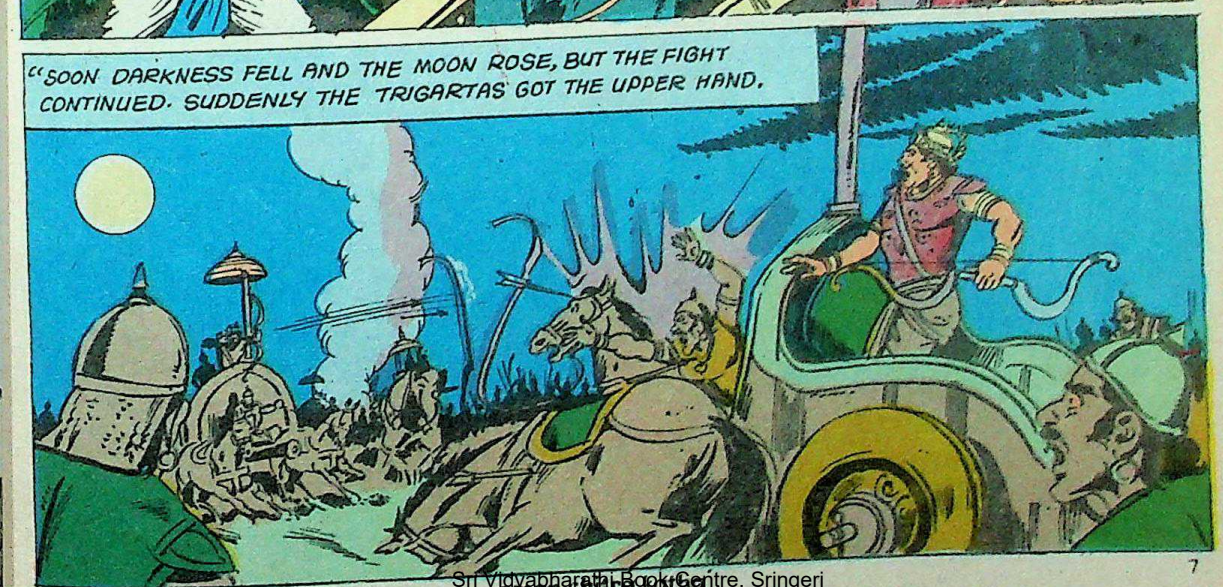

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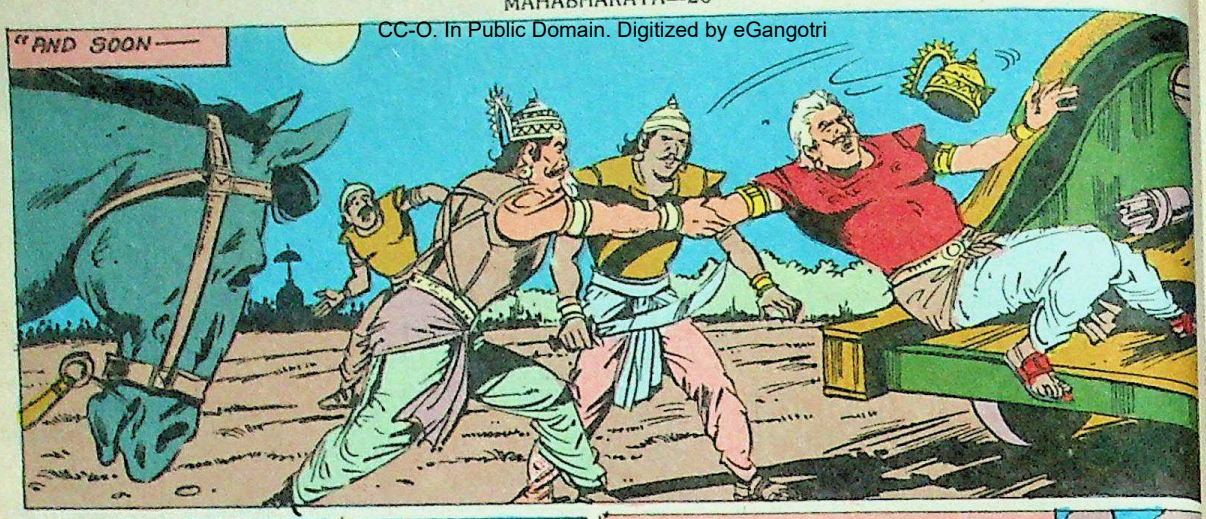

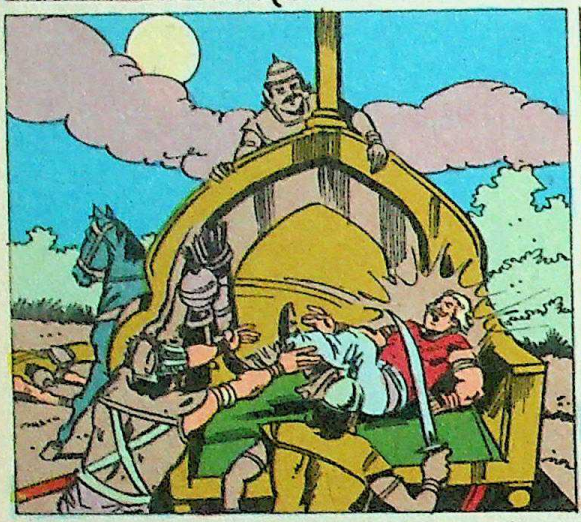

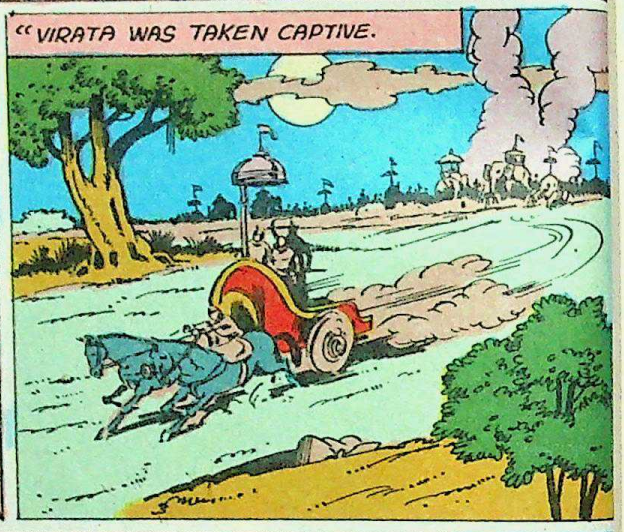

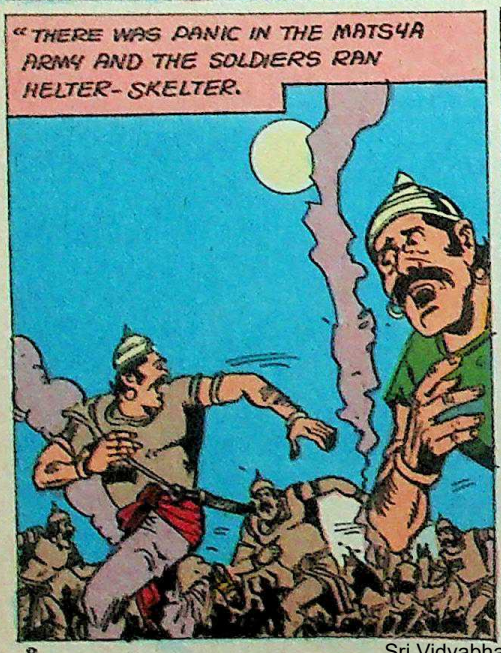

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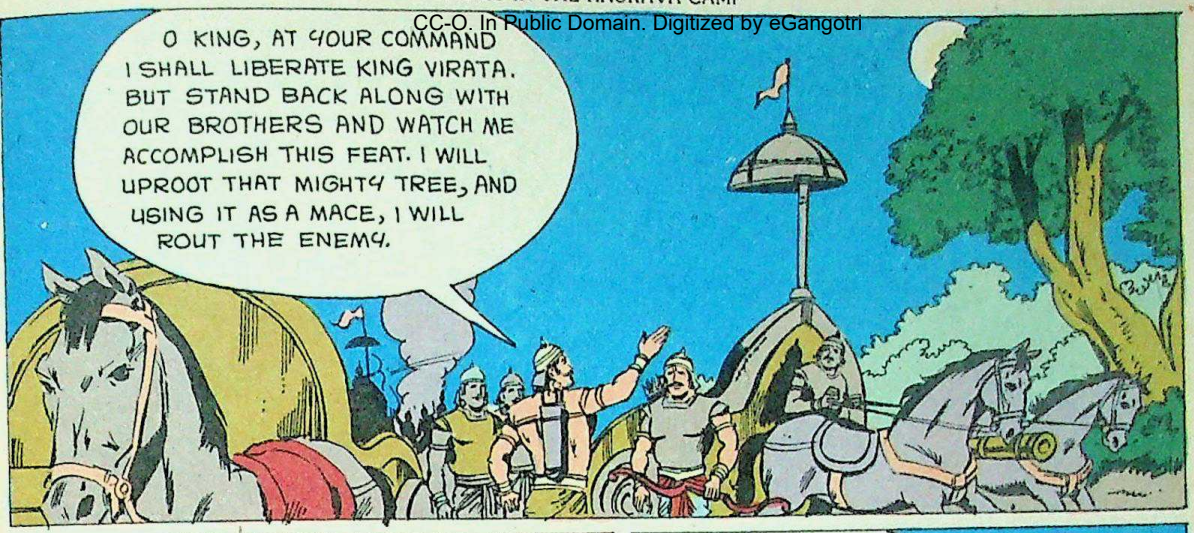

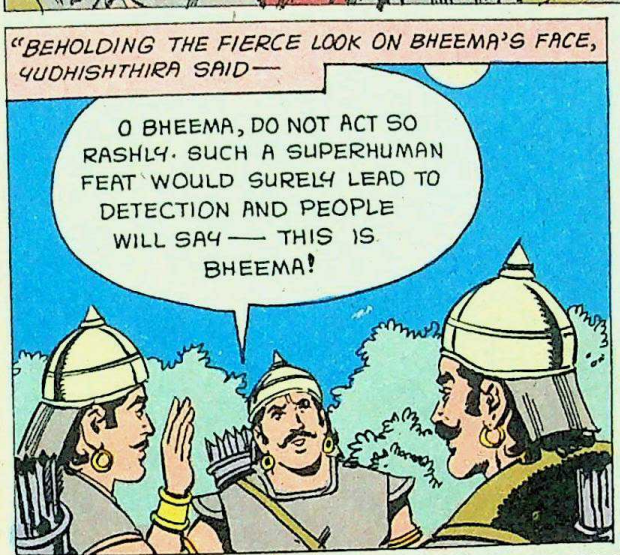

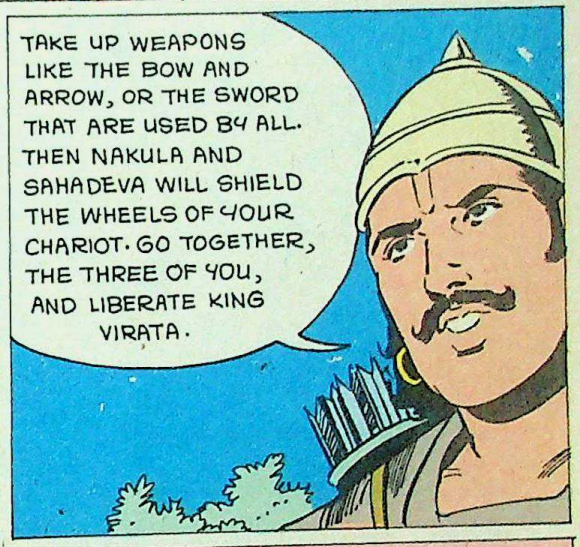

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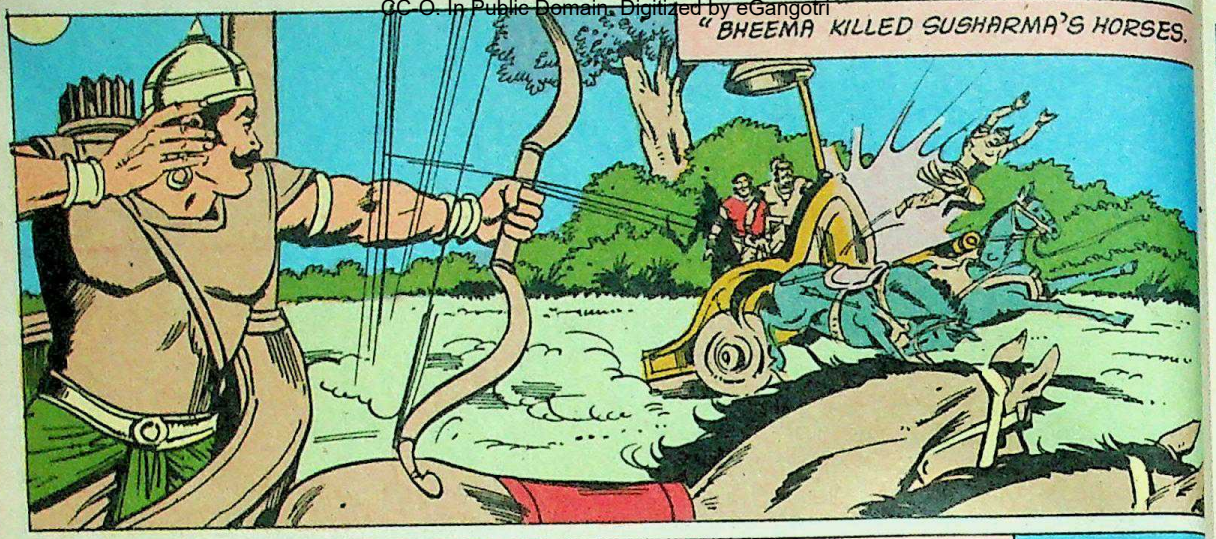

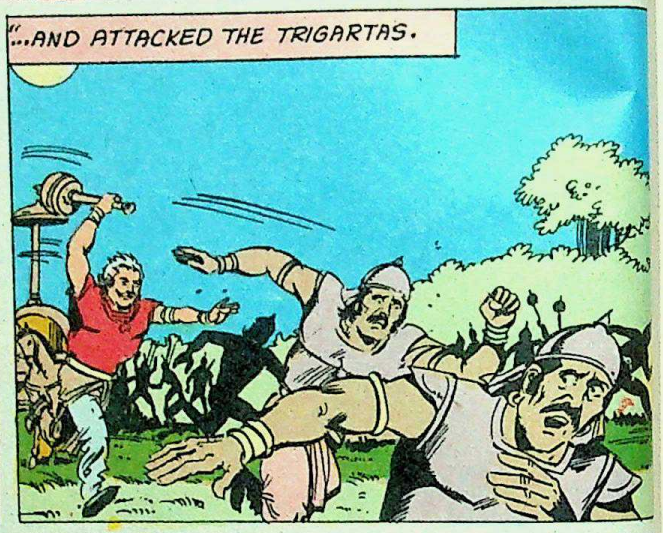

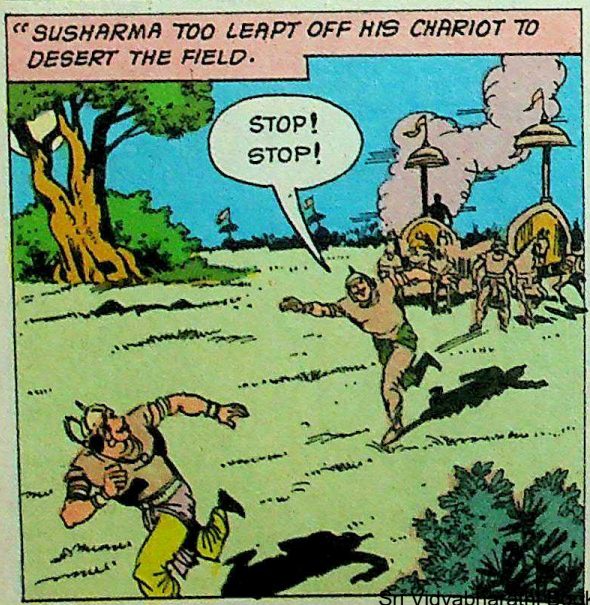

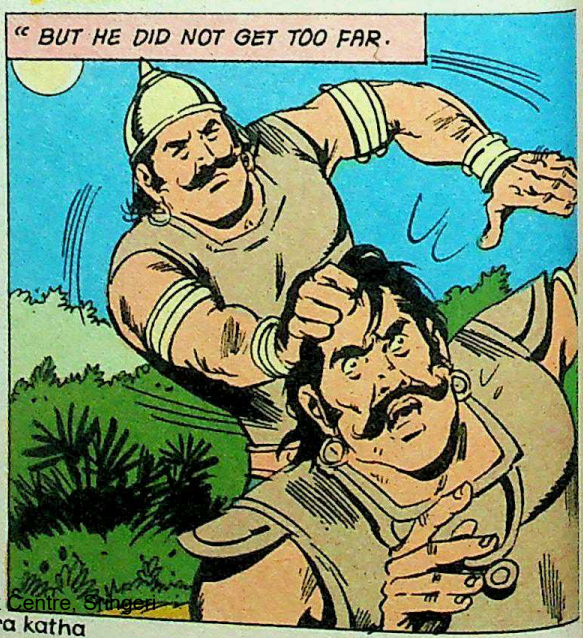

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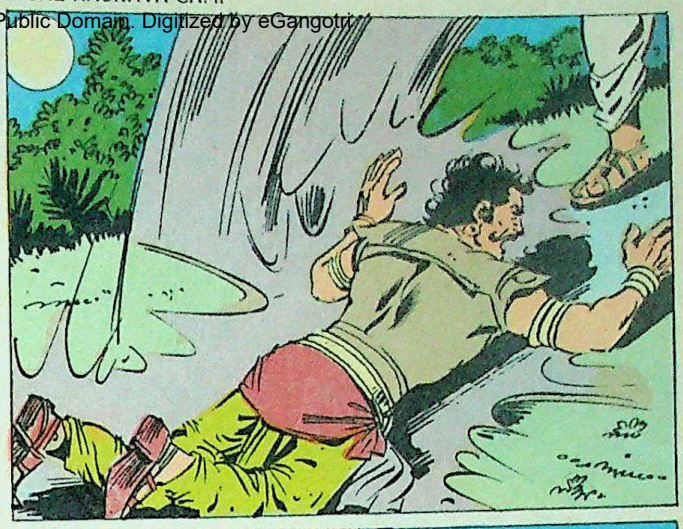

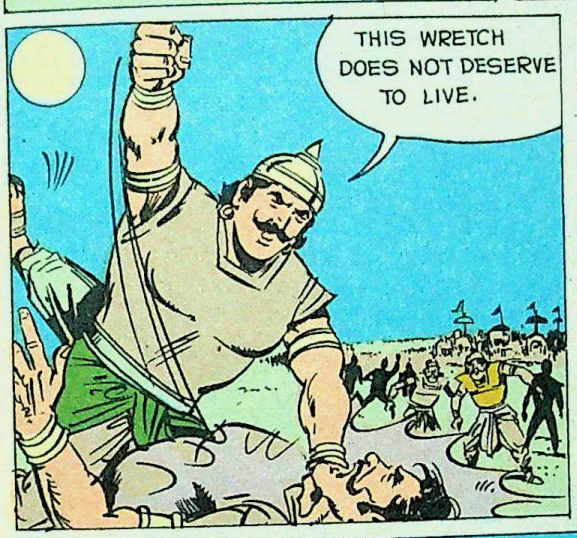

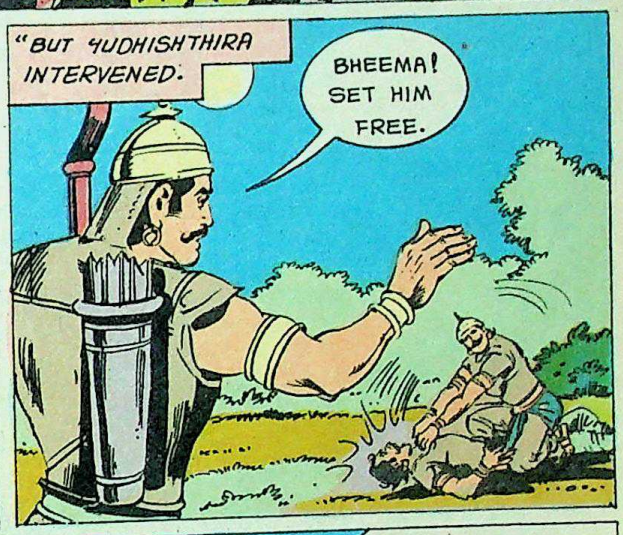

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"TURNING TO SUSHARMA, YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—

GO! YOU ARE FREE. BUT REFRAIN FROM SUCH ACTS IN FUTURE.

"OVERWHELMED WITH SHAME, SUSHARMA PAID HIS RESPECT TO VIRATA AND PROCEEDED TO HIS OWN KINGDOM.

"KING VIRATA THEN ADDRESSED THE PANDAVAS.

YOU HAVE RESCUED ME FROM THE CLUTCHES OF THE ENEMY. YOU ARE NOW MASTERS OF MY KINGDOM AND MY WEALTH. KANKA, I WISH TO CROWN YOU KING.

WE ARE HAPPY THAT YOU ARE FREE, O KING. ALL I WISH IS YOUR SAFE ENTRY INTO YOUR CAPITAL AND A HAPPY REUNION WITH YOUR FAMILY.

BUT, O MONARCH, WHILE VIRATA WAS BUSY RECOVERING HIS COWS FROM THE TRIGARTAS, DURYODHANA AND HIS COUNSELLORS INVADED THE MATSYA KINGDOM FROM THE NORTHERN FRONT. AND SIXTY THOUSAND HEAD OF CATTLE WERE LED AWAY.

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PROCEED TO WHERE THE KAURAVAS HAVE ASSEMBLED. I WILL RESCUE THE CATTLE AND RETURN TO THE CITY WITH THEM.

"BUT AS THEY NEARED THE KAURAVA TROOPS—

LET US TURN BACK. I DARE NOT FIGHT THESE HEROIC WARRIORS. AT THE SIGHT OF THE GREAT KAURAVAS MY HAIR IS STANDING ON END AND I AM FEELING FAINT.

"AND THE WEAK AND FOOLISH UTTARA BEGAN TO BEWAIL HIS FATE.

MY FATHER HAS GONE TO FIGHT THE TRIGARTAS, LEAVING ME ALONE WITHOUT AN ARMY. I AM A MERE BOY. HOW AM I EXPECTED TO ENCOUNTER THESE MIGHTY WARRIORS? O BRIHANNALA, LET US TURN BACK.

IT WAS AT YOUR COMMAND THAT I CAME HERE. IF WE RETURN NOW WITHOUT RETRIEVING THE COWS, BRAVE MEN WILL RIDICULE YOU AND WOMEN WILL LAUGH AT YOU.

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I CANNOT RETURN TO THE CITY WITHOUT THE CATTLE. AFTER ALL THE PRAISES THAT SAIRANDHRI HAS SUNG ON MY BEHALF, HOW CAN I REFRAIN FROM FIGHTING?

IF YOU CANNOT TAKE AWAY ALL OF THE MATSYA WEALTH. LET MEN AND WOMEN LAUGH AT ME. LET THE CATTLE PERISH AND THE CITY BE DESERTED. BUT THERE IS NO PLACE FOR ME IN THIS BATTLE.

"SAYING THIS, UTTARA FLUNG HIS BOW AND ARROW AND LEAPT OFF HIS CHARIOT.

"BRIHANNALA FOLLOWED HIM.

RETURN, O PRINCE. THIS IS NOT HOW A BRAVE KSHATRIYA SHOULD BEHAVE. EVEN DEATH IN BATTLE IS BETTER THAN FLIGHT OUT OF FEAR.

HA! HA!

"BRIHANNALA CAUGHT UP WITH UTTARA.

SET ME FREE, BRIHANNALA. I WILL GIVE YOU A HUNDRED GOLD COINS, JEWELS, A CHARIOT AND ALSO TEN ELEPHANTS. BUT SET ME FREE.

IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO FIGHT, COME, HOLD THE REINS OF THE HORSES, WHILE I FIGHT THE ENEMY. FEAR NOT. I WILL FIGHT THE KAURAVAS AND RECOVER ALL THE CATTLE.

AND SO THEY PROCEEDED TOWARDS THE SHAMI TREE IN WHICH THE PANDAVAS HAD HIDDEN THEIR WEAPONS.

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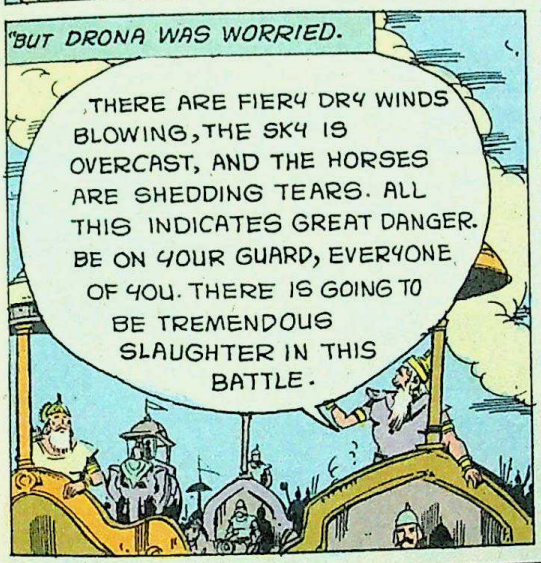

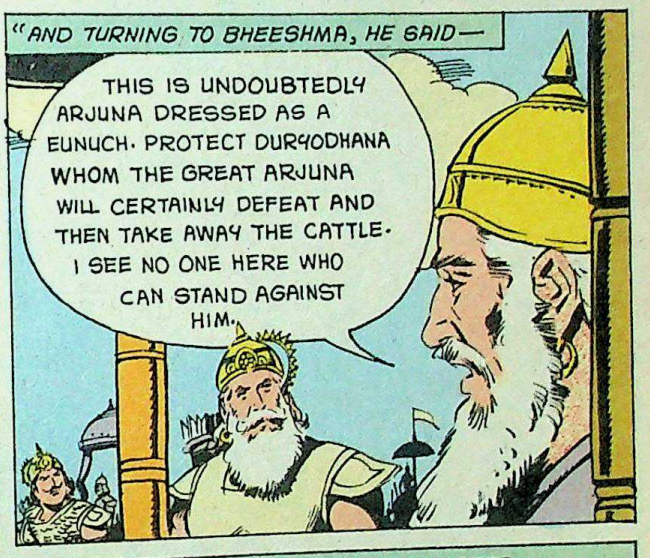

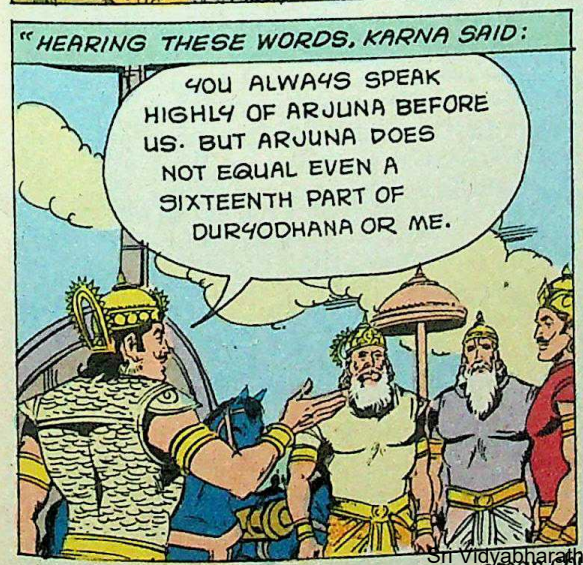

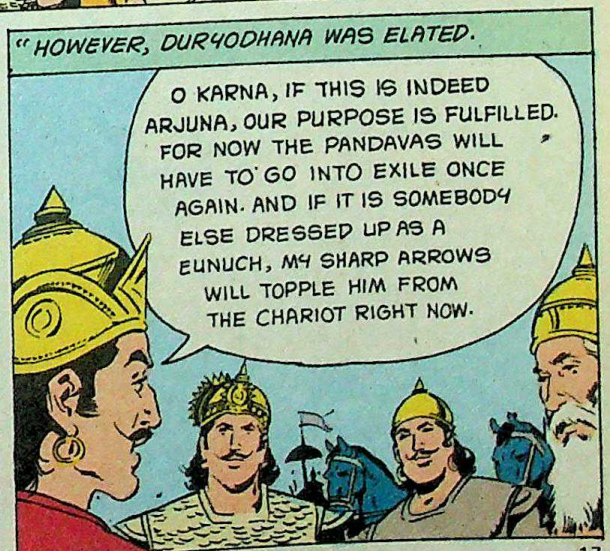

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"MEANWHILE BRIHANNALA HAD COME TO THE SHAMI TREE IN WHICH THE WEAPONS HAD BEEN HIDDEN.

CLIMB UP THIS TREE AND BRING DOWN THE BOWS THAT ARE KEPT THERE.

WHAT BOWS? THAT IS A CORPSE! I WILL BE DEFILED IF I TOUCH IT.

DO NOT FEAR. YOU WILL REMAIN CLEAN AND UNPOLLUTED. IT IS NOT A CORPSE. IT ONLY LOOKS LIKE ONE.

"UTTARA CLIMBED UP THE SHAMI TREE AND BROUGHT DOWN THE WEAPONS.

"BUT UTTARA COULD NOT HOLD BACK HIS SURPRISE WHEN HE REMOVED THE LEAFY COVERING ON THE WEAPONS—

WEAPONS! TO WHOM DO THESE EXCELLENT WEAPONS BELONG? TELL ME TRUTHFULLY, O BRIHANNALA.

THESE WEAPONS BELONG TO THE MIGHTY PANDAVAS.

BUT WHERE ARE THE BRILLIANT SONS OF PANDU TO WHOM THESE WEAPONS BELONG? WHERE IS THEIR WIFE DRAUPADI?

"BRIHANNALA EXPLAINED TO HIM.

I AM ARJUNA. KANKA, YOUR FATHER'S COURTIER, IS YUDHISHTHIRA AND THE COOK BALLAVA, BHEEMA. GRANTHIKA IS NAKULA, VIRATA'S ROYAL GROOM AND TANTIPALA IS SAHADEVA IN CHARGE OF THE COW-PEN. DRAUPADI IS IN THE DISGUISE OF THE QUEEN'S SAIRANDHRI.

O ARJUNA, I AM FORTUNATE TO BEHOLD YOU. FORGIVE MY HAVING SAID UNSEEMLY THINGS TO YOU.

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"MOUNTING THE CHARIOT, UTTARA SAID—

I AM REASSURED NOW. I WILL BE YOUR CHARIOTEER. COMMAND ME AND I WILL DRIVE YOU WHEREVER YOU WISH. GIVE ME YOUR BLESSINGS.

"REPLACING HIS BROTHERS' WEAPONS, ARJUNA TOOK UP HIS OWN.

"THEN HE TOOK OFF HIS BRACELETS AND WORE A PAIR OF GOLD GLOVES. TYING BACK HIS LOCKS WITH A PIECE OF WHITE CLOTH, HE GOT ON TO THE CHARIOT.

DO NOT FEAR. I WILL FIGHT THE KAURAVAS AND RECOVER THE CATTLE.

"AND AS THEY DROVE AHEAD TOWARDS THE KAURAVA ARMY, ARJUNA BLEW HIS CONCH SHELL, DEVADATTA.

"HEARING THIS, DURYODHANA EXCLAIMED GLEEFULLY—

IT IS ARJUNA! THE PANDAVAS HAVE FAILED TO KEEP THEIR PLEDGE. THEY WILL HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE FOREST FOR ANOTHER TWELVE YEARS.

"BUT BHEESHMA INTERVENED—

THE THIRTEENTH YEAR ENDED FIVE MONTHS AND TWELVE DAYS AGO.* IT IS FOR YOU NOW, O DURYODHANA, TO MAKE PEACE OR WAR ON ARJUNA, WHOSE ARRIVAL IS IMMINENT.

* ACCORDING TO THE LUNAR CALENDAR. EVEN ACCORDING TO THE SOLAR CALENDAR THE THIRTEENTH YEAR HAD ENDED SIX DAYS EARLIER.

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BUT I WILL NOT GIVE BACK TO THE PANDAVAS THEIR KINGDOM. SO LET US PREPARE FOR WAR!

DEAR NEPHEW, I WILL GO WITH YOU AND THE CATTLE TOWARDS HASTINAPURA. MYSELF, DRONA, KARNA, ASHWATTHAMA AND KRIPA WILL FIGHT ARJUNA.

"FROM HIS CHARIOT, ARJUNA SURVEYED THE KAURAVA FORCES.

DURYODHANA IS NOT TO BE SEEN ANYWHERE. I SUSPECT HE IS TRYING TO ESCAPE BY A SOUTHERN ROUTE, DRIVING THE CATTLE WITH HIM. LET US PURSUE HIM.

"UTTARA VEERED THE CHARIOT ROUND TO CHASE DURYODHANA···

"··· WHILE ARJUNA FILLED THE AIR WITH COUNTLESS ARROWS.

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"HE ALSO REPULSED THE ATTACKS OF KRIPA, DRONA, ASHWATTHAMA, BHEESHMA AND THE OTHERS. THE ONES DEFEATED TOOK TO FLIGHT.

"ARJUNA THEN USED THE SAMMOHANA* WEAPON AND THE REMAINING ARMY FELL UNCONSCIOUS.

"LATER, UTTARA TOOK WITH HIM THE CLOTHES OF THE UNCONSCIOUS SOLDIERS.

HAVING VANQUISHED THE KAURAVAS, ARJUNA ROUNDED UP THE CATTLE. THEN, RETURNING TO THE CREMATION GROUND, HE PUT AWAY THE WEAPONS. AFTER THIS, O MONARCH, THE MIGHTY ARJUNA REVERTED ONCE AGAIN TO THE ROLE OF BRIHANNALA AND GUIDED THE CHARIOT BACK TOWARDS THE MATSYA KINGDOM.

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*WEAPON THAT HYPNOTISES

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"MEANWHILE, KING VIRATA, HAVING VANQUISHED THE TRIGARTAS, RETURNED TO THE CAPITAL AMIDST GREAT REJOICING.

HAIL!

HAIL!

BUT WHERE IS UTTARA?

O KING, THE KURUS ATTACKED US FROM THE NORTHERN FRONT. THE BRAVE UTTARA SET FORTH WITH BRIHANNALA TO RESCUE THE CATTLE.

"VIRATA WAS ANXIOUS.

SELECT THOSE FROM AMONG MY SOLDIERS WHO ARE NOT WOUNDED AND SEND THEM FORTH TO HELP UTTARA.

"BUT YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—

BRIHANNALA HAS ACCOMPANIED THE PRINCE, YOU NEED HAVE NO FEAR. THEY WILL SURELY RETURN SUCCESSFUL.

"JUST THEN—

O LORD, THE KURUS HAVE BEEN DEFEATED! UTTARA AND BRIHANNALA ARE RETURNING WITH THE CATTLE.

THE NEWS IS NOT SURPRISING! WITH BRIHANNALA FOR A CHARIOTEER...

"KING VIRATA, HOWEVER, WAS OVERJOYED.

DECORATE THE HIGHWAYS. MUSICIANS AND DANCERS SHOULD RECEIVE THE PRINCE. HE MUST BE GIVEN A FITTING WELCOME.

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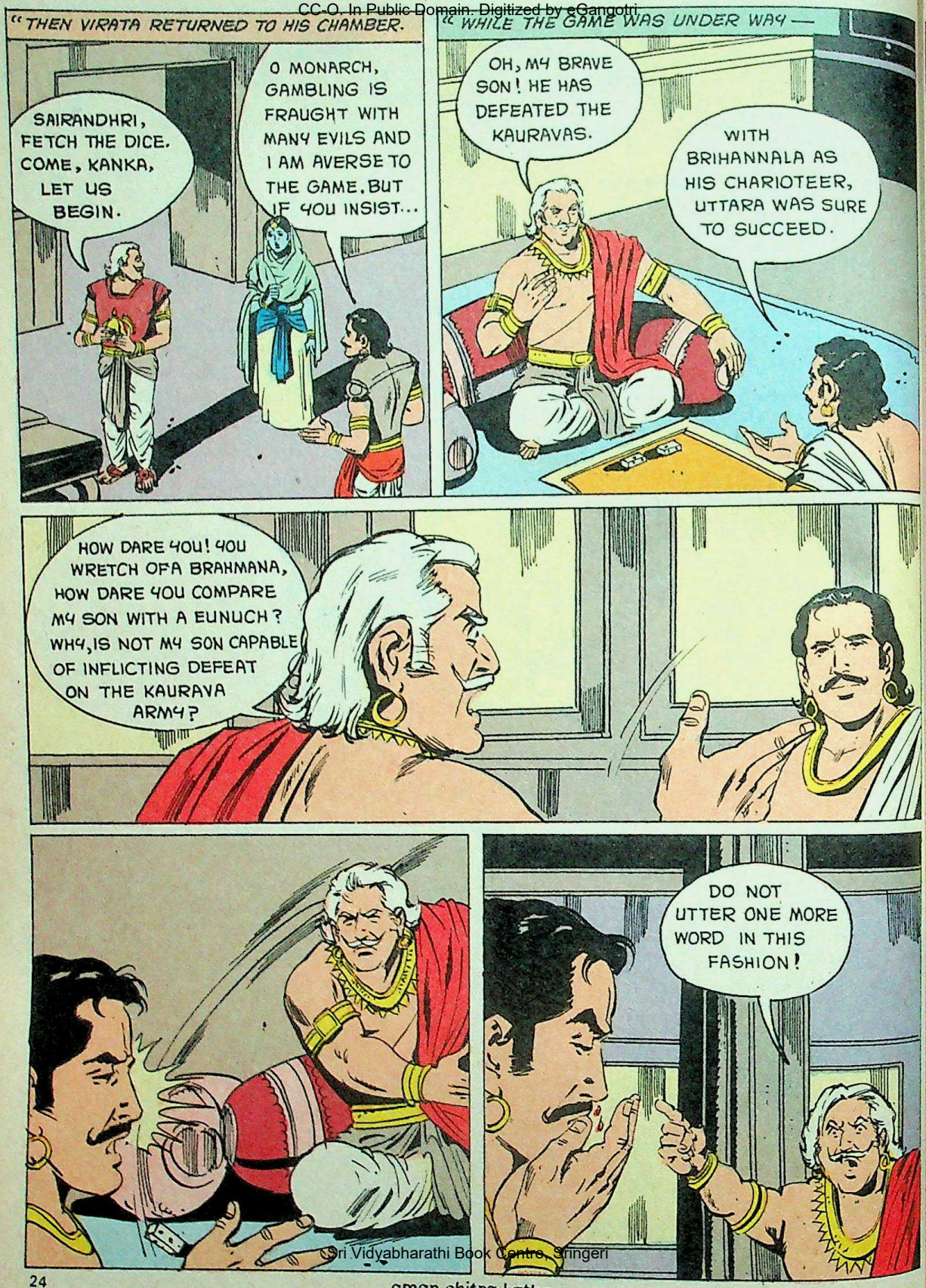

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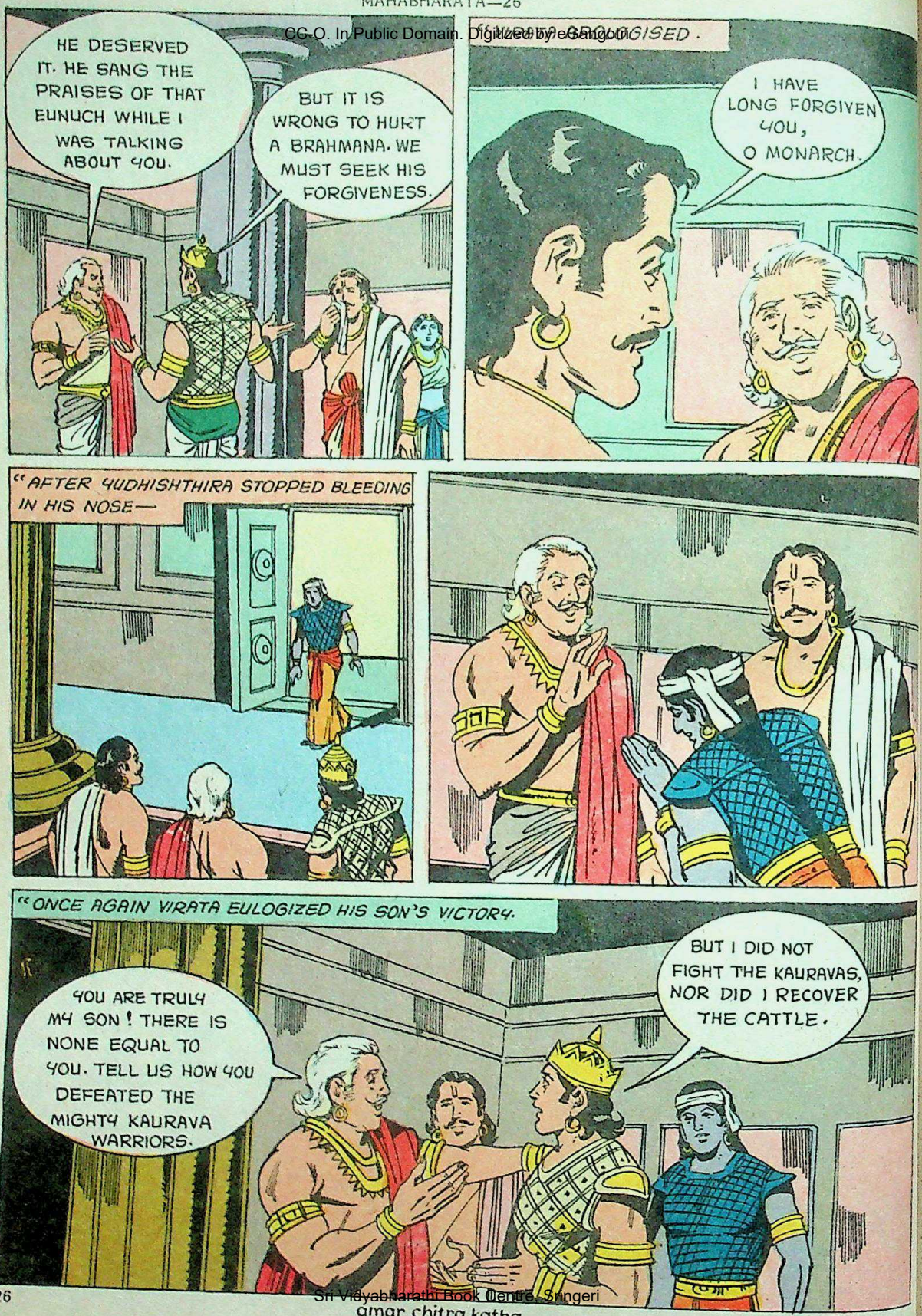

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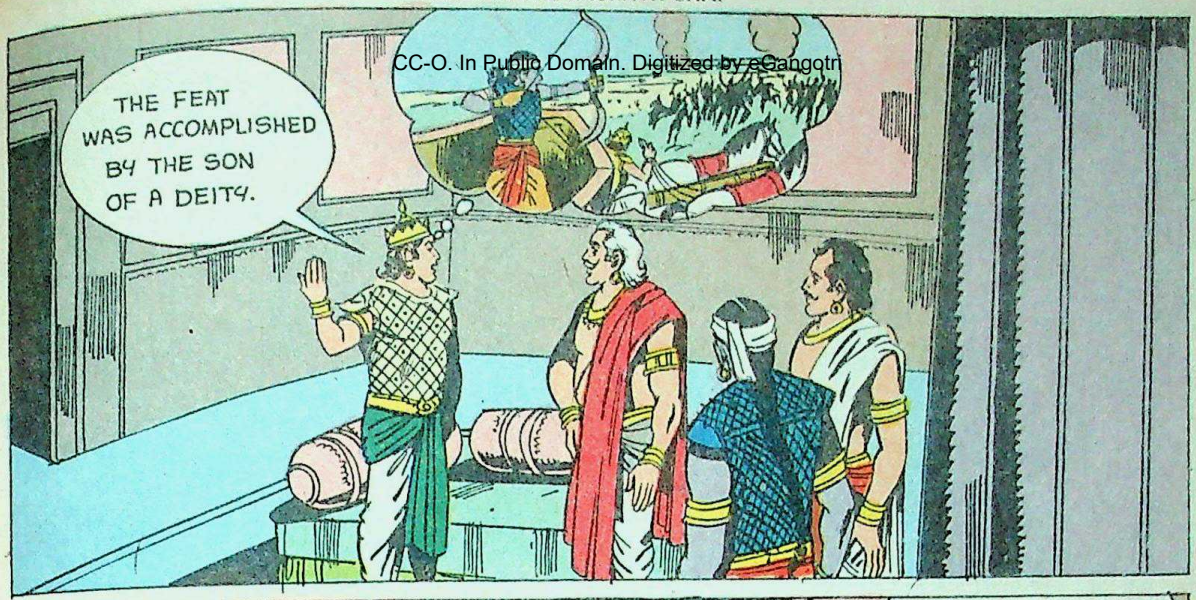

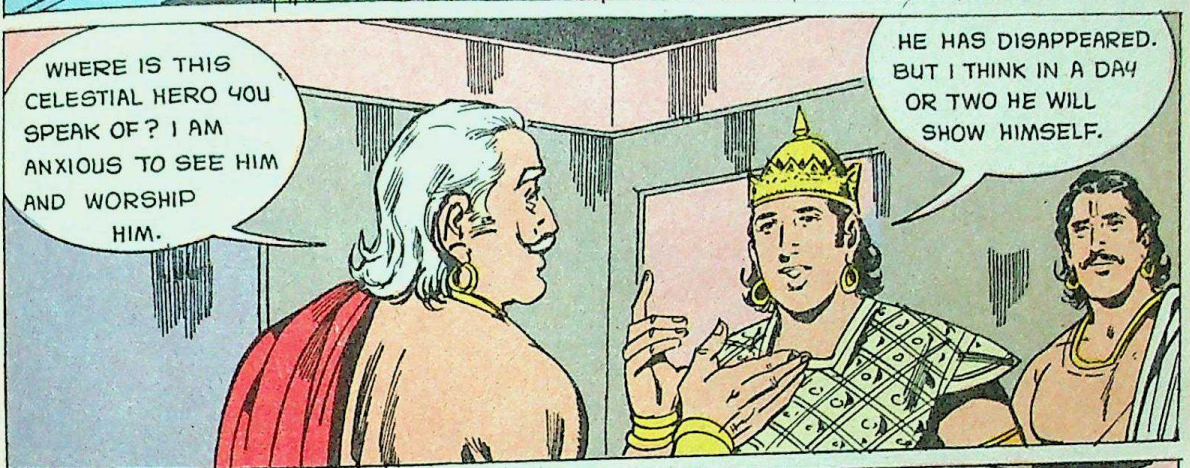

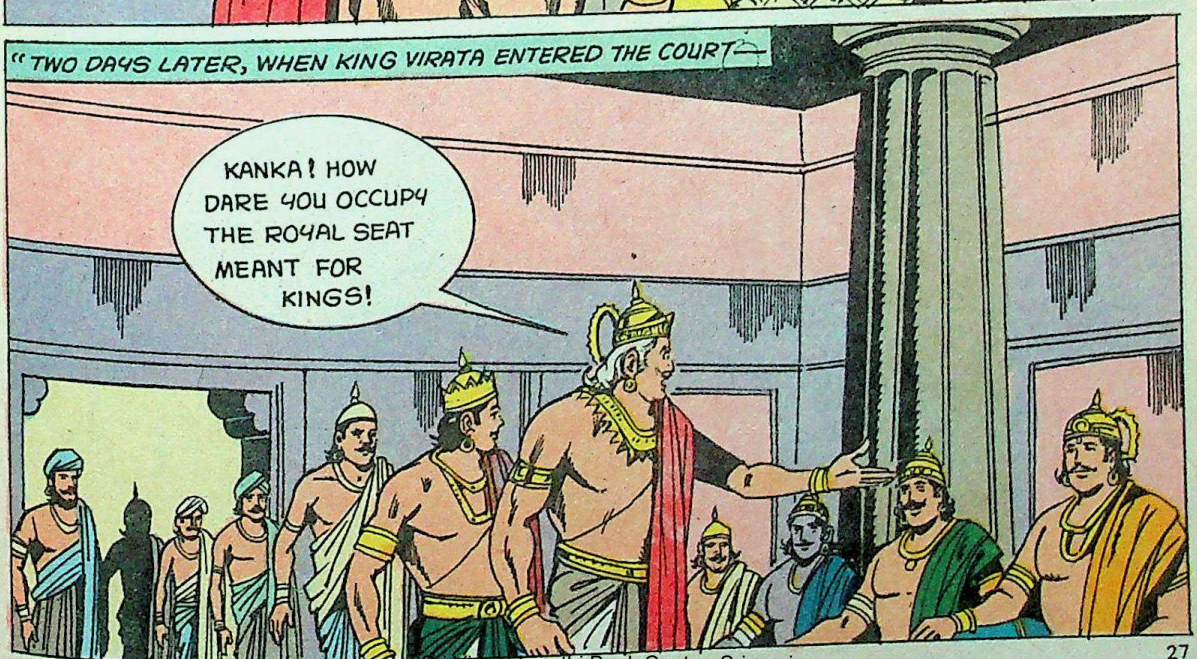

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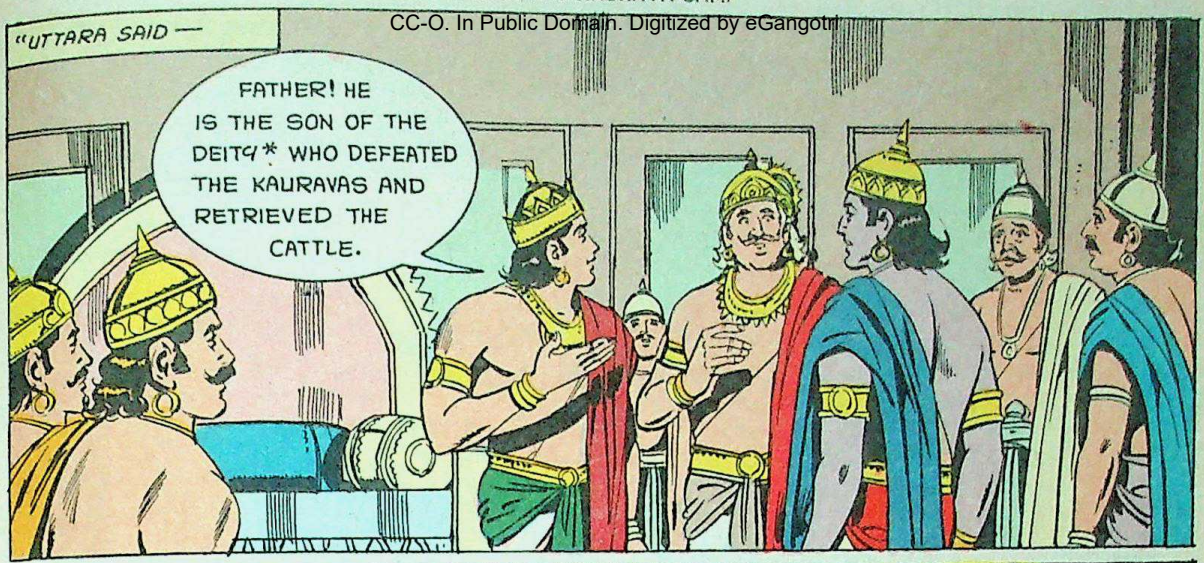

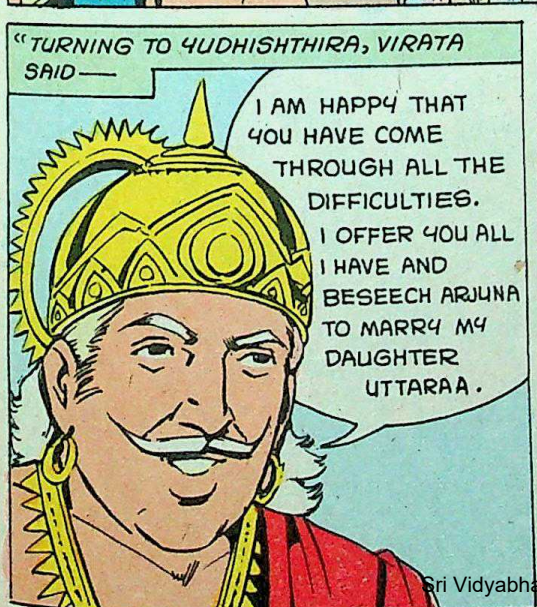

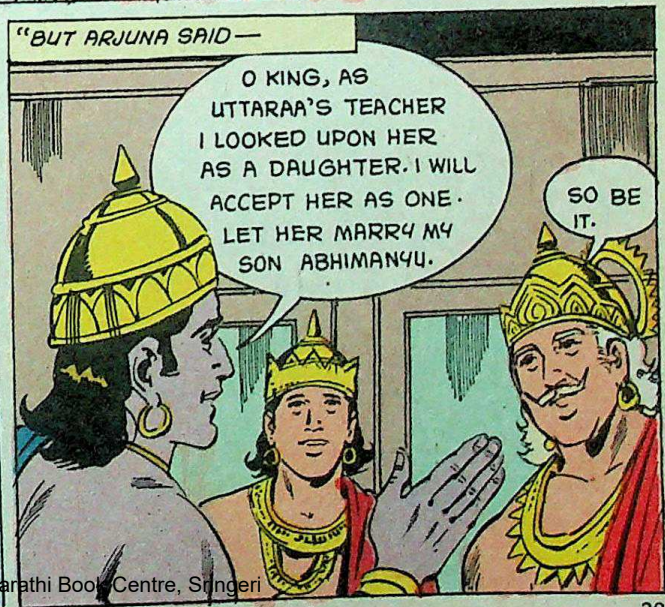

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* ARJUNA WAS OBTAINED BY KUNTI THROUGH THE BLESSING OF INDRA.

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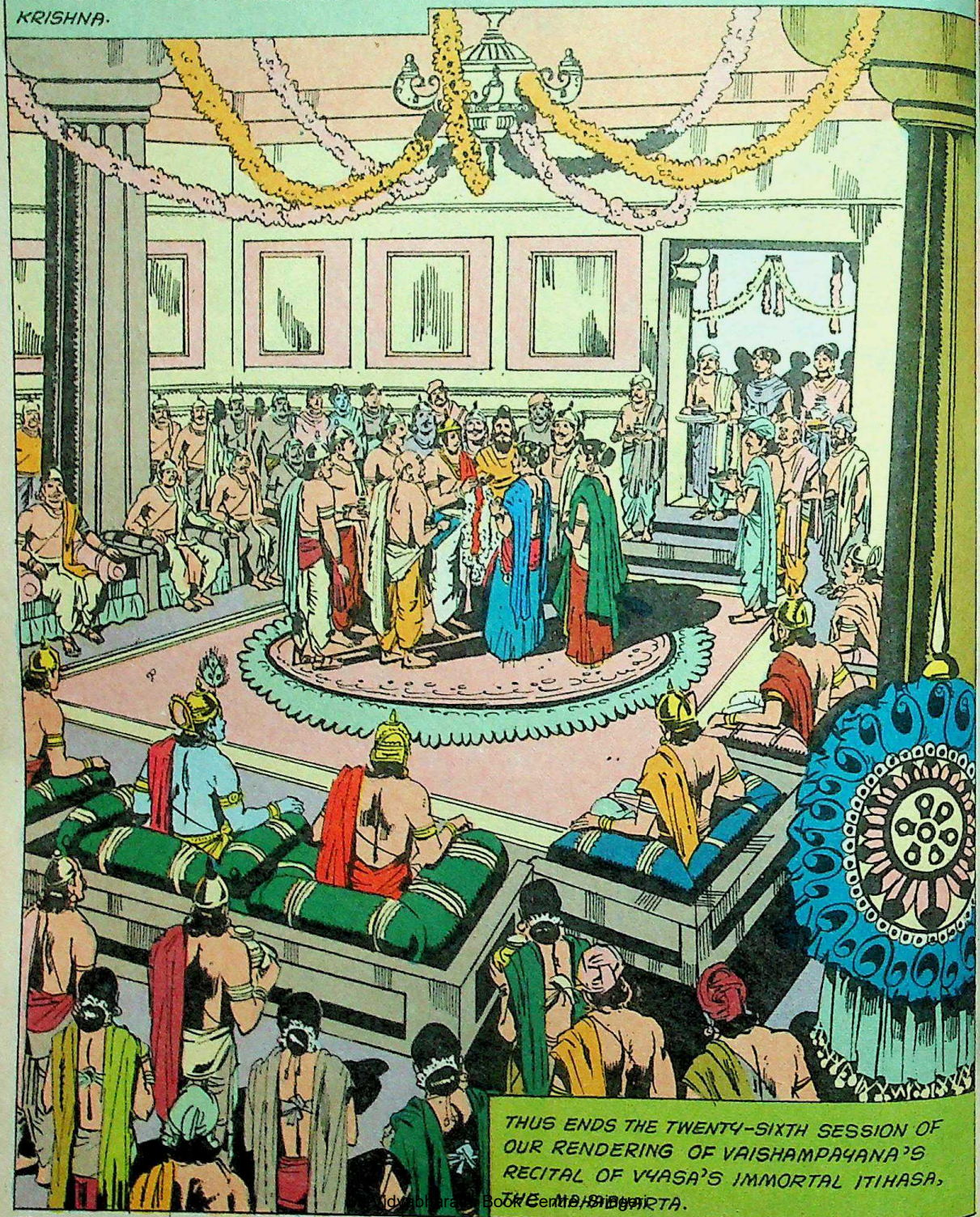
"THE PANDAVAS THEN TOOK UP THEIR ABODE IN THE MATSYA TOWN OF UPAPLAVYA. ABHIMANYU WAS SENT FOR. AND ON THE DAY OF THE WEDDING, GUESTS POURED IN FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. THE KING OF KASHI, THE MIGHTY DRUPADA, THE INVINCIBLE DHRISHTADYUMNA AND SEVERAL BRAHMANAS CAME. KRISHNA ALSO CAME WITH A HUGE RETINUE TO GIVE HIS BLESSINGS TO THE COUPLE. AND ARJUNA ACCEPTED UTTARAA AS HIS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW IN THE PRESENCE OF KRISHNA.



THUS ENDS THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, THE MAHABHARATA.

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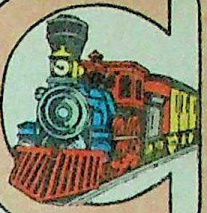

ANIMAL LIFE

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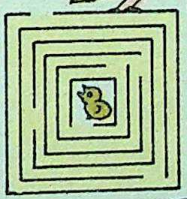

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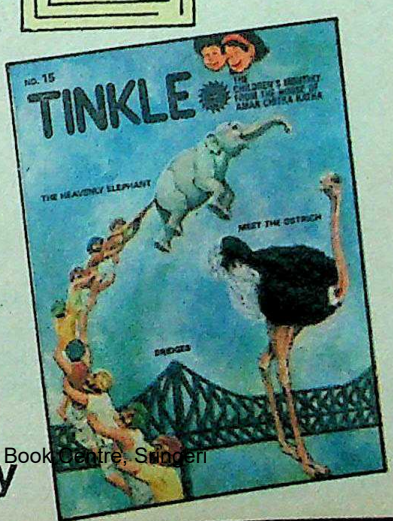

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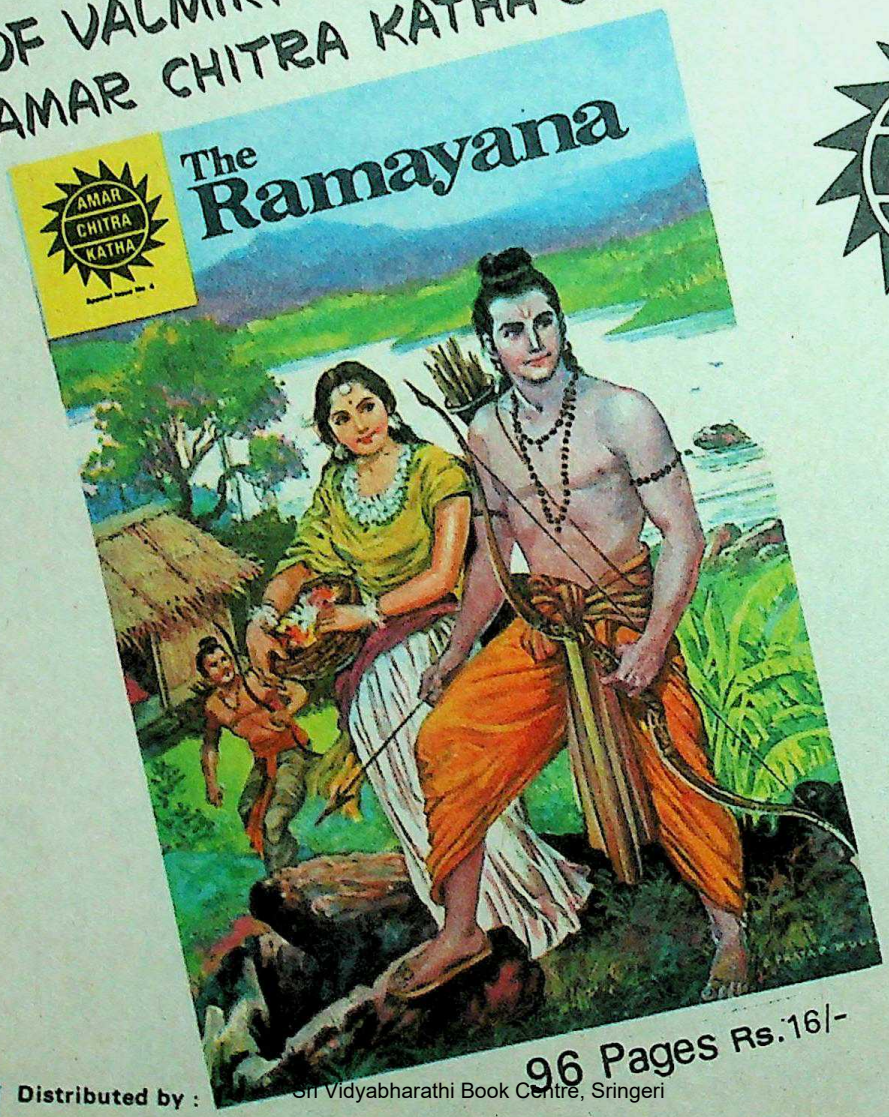

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Mahabharata – 27

SANJAYA'S MISSION

O MONARCH, THE WEDDING CELEBRATIONS OF ABHIMANYU AND UTTARAA HAVING ENDED AMIDST GREAT REJOICINGS, THE ILLUSTRIOUS DESCENDANTS OF THE KURU RACE ASSEMBLED AT THE COURT OF KING VIRATA.

"THE ASSEMBLY AMONG OTHERS, CONSISTED OF THE FIVE GREAT PANDAVAS. VIRATA AND DRUPADA OCCUPIED SEATS OF HONOUR. THE REVERED KRISHNA AND BALARAMA CAME ALONG WITH THEIR FATHER. AND THE SONS OF DRAUPADI AND SATYAKI CAME TOO.

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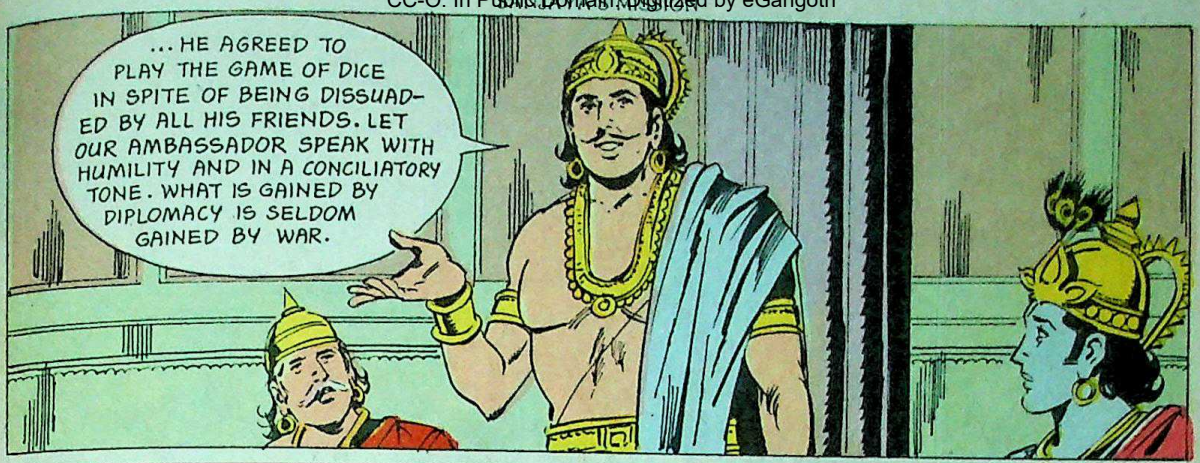

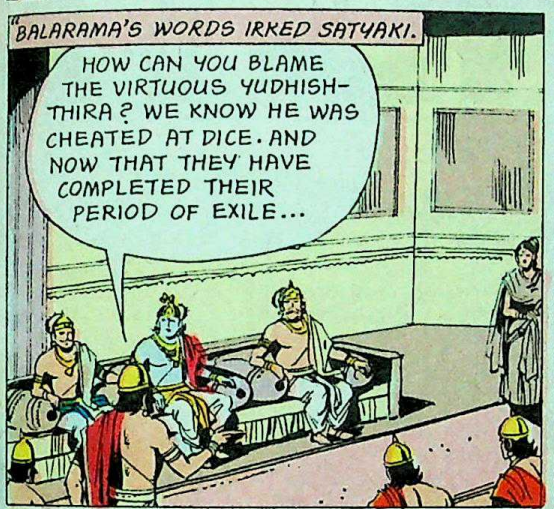

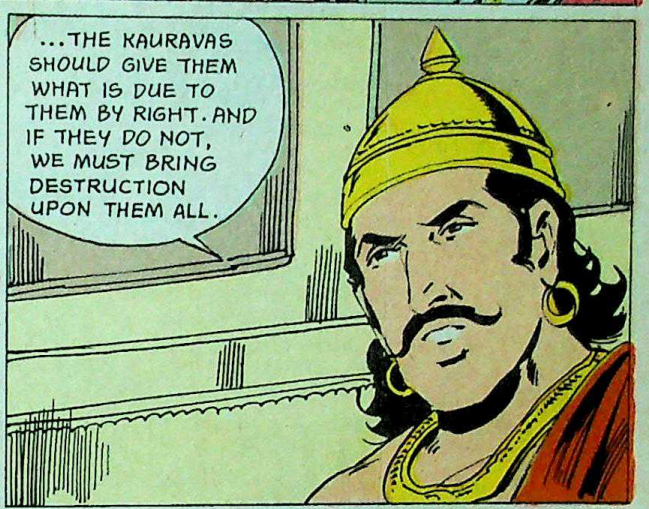

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DRUPADA SUMMONED HIS PRIEST—

YOU ARE LEARNED AND YOU KNOW ON WHOSE SIDE RIGHT IS. GO TO DHRITARASHTRA AND TRY TO CONVINCE HIM OF DURYODHANA'S FOLLY.

AND SO, ON REACHING HASTINAPURA, DRUPADA'S PRIEST APPROACHED THE KAURAVA ELDERS.

GREETINGS, O REVERED SIRS.

O ILLUSTRIOUS MEN, BOTH DHRITARASHTRA AND PANDU BEING SONS OF THE SAME FATHER, THEIR PROPERTY SHOULD BE EQUALLY DIVIDED AMONG THEIR SONS.

AGAIN AND AGAIN, DHRITARASHTRA'S SONS HAVE TRIED TO GET RID OF THE PANDAVAS AND KEEP THE WHOLE KINGDOM TO THEMSELVES. BUT THEY HAVE BEEN REPEATEDLY UNSUCCESSFUL.

THE PANDAVAS NOW DEMAND THEIR RIGHTFUL SHARE. BUT THEY HATE TO GO TO WAR WITH THEIR KIN. HOWEVER, IF THEY ARE DENIED THEIR RIGHT AND THE KAURAVAS ARE IN A MOOD TO FIGHT, YUDHISHTHIRA IS PREPARED TO TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE.

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BHEESHMA CAUTIONED—

KARNA, YOU HAVE SEEN ARJUNA'S PROGRESS IN BATTLE. IF WE DO NOT MAKE PEACE, WE WILL ALL BE SLAIN.

DHRITARASHTRA SAID—

BHEESHMA IS RIGHT. FOR THE GOOD OF THE WHOLE WORLD, THERE SHOULD BE NO WAR.

TURNING TO THE BRAHMANA, HE SAID—

O BRAHMANA, YOU MAY RETURN TO UPA-PLAVYA. AFTER HOLDING DELIBERATIONS AMONG OURSELVES I WILL SEND SANJAYA TO CONVEY OUR DECISION.

SOON AFTERWARDS THE BRAHMANA LEFT FOR UPAPLAVYA.

MEANWHILE ARJUNA SET OUT FOR DWARAKA TO SEEK KRISHNA'S HELP.

ON HEARING OF THIS DURYODHANA TOO SPED TOWARDS DWARAKA.

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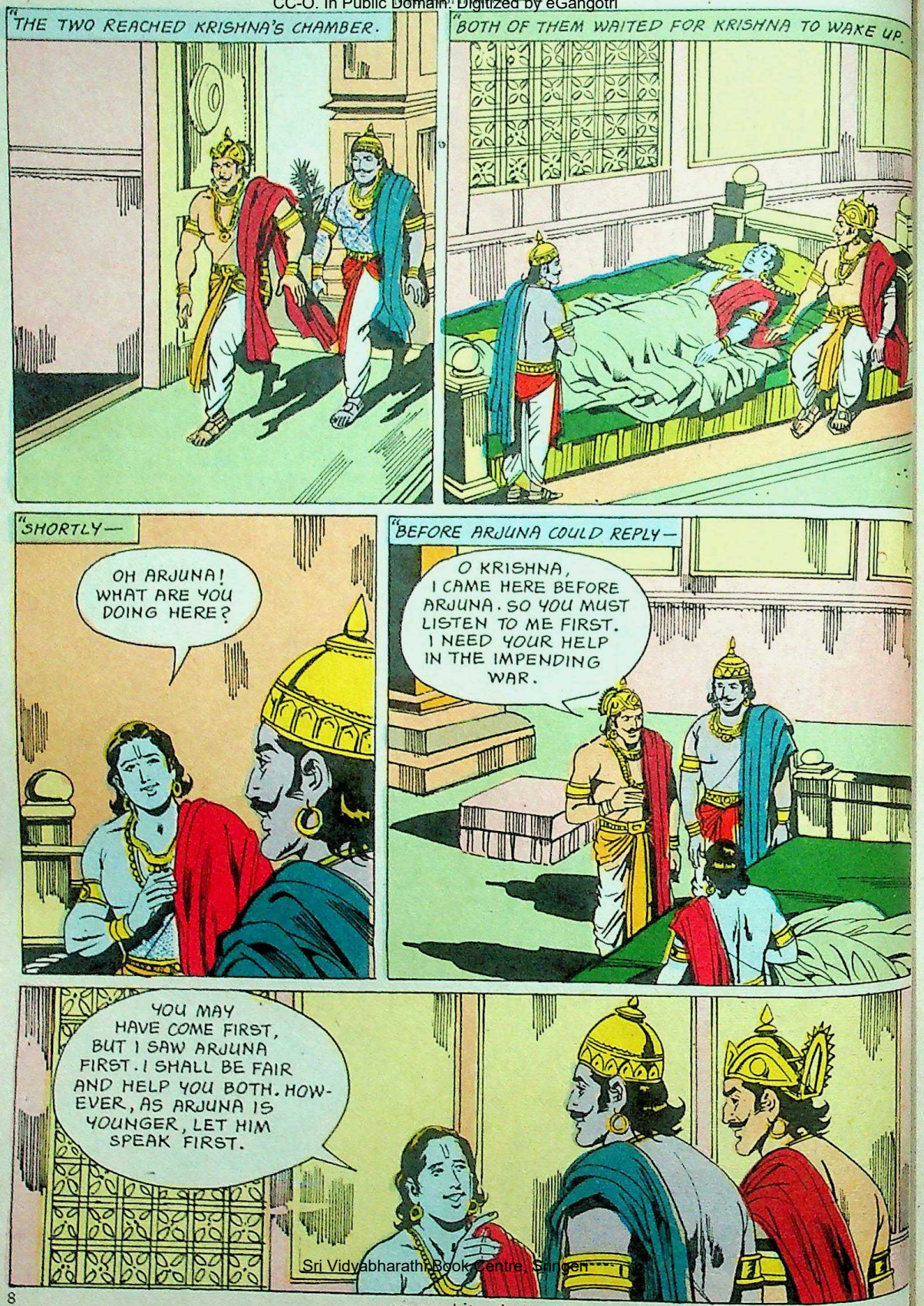

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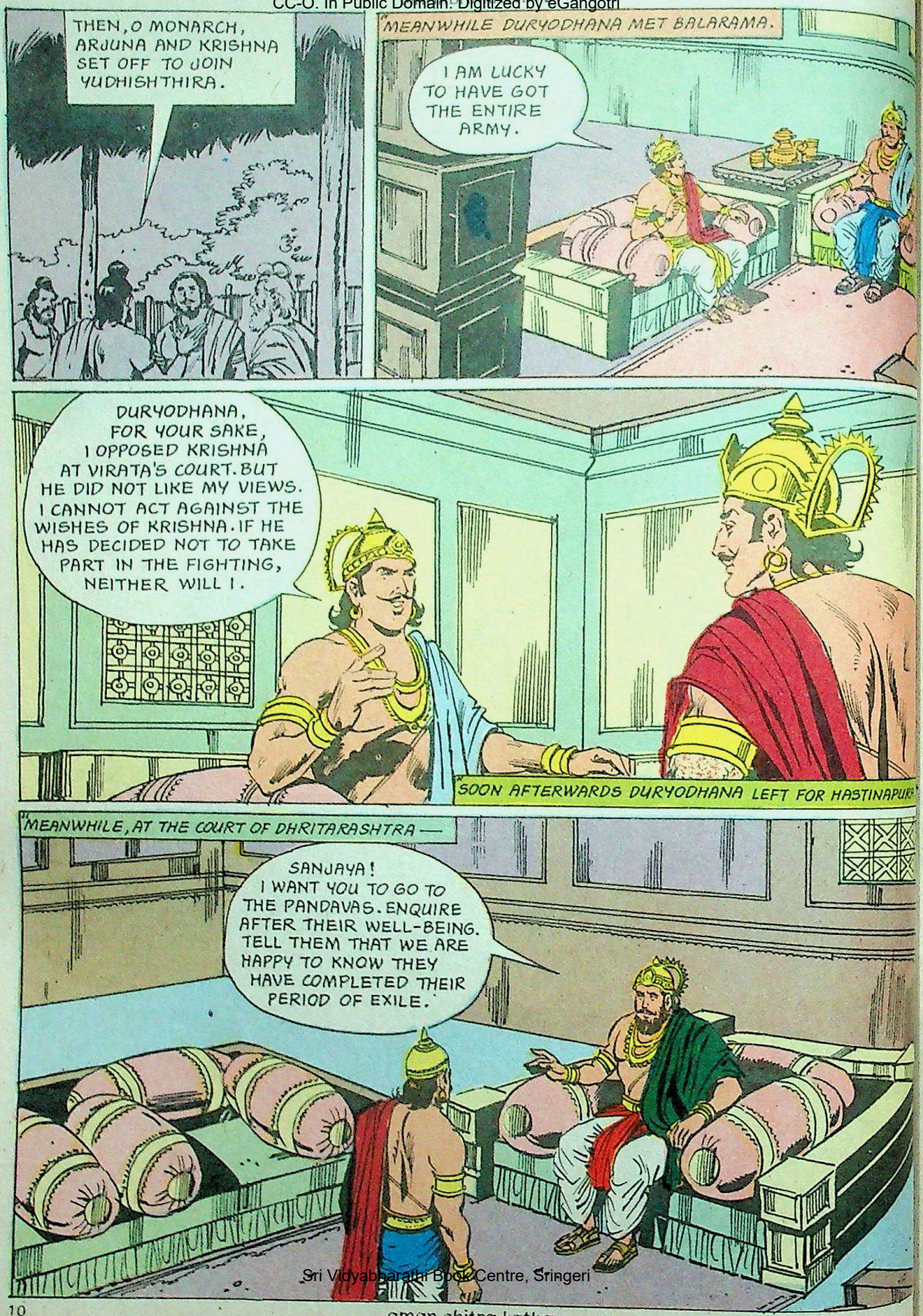

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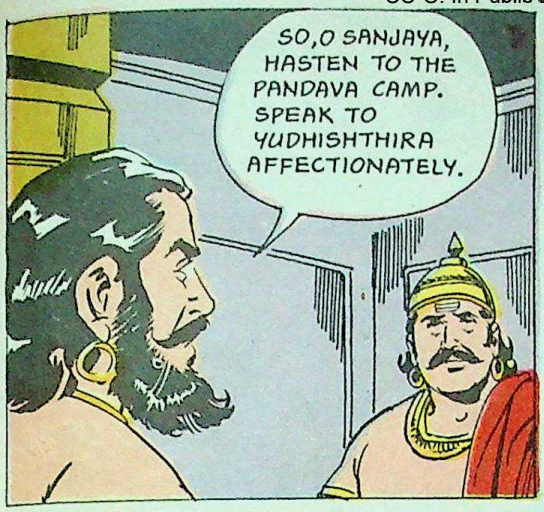

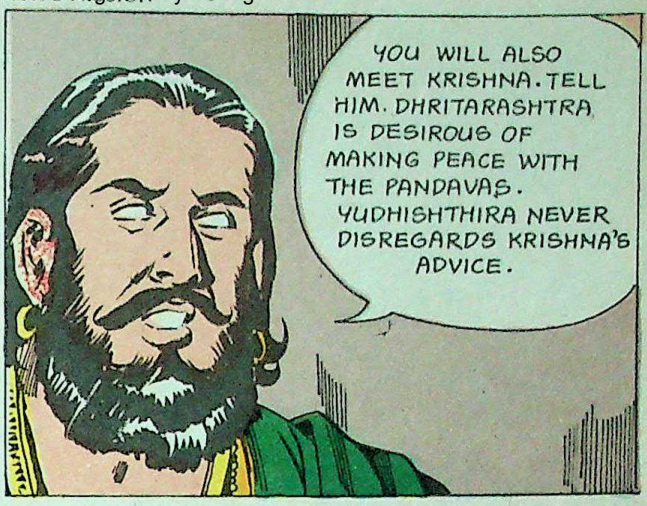

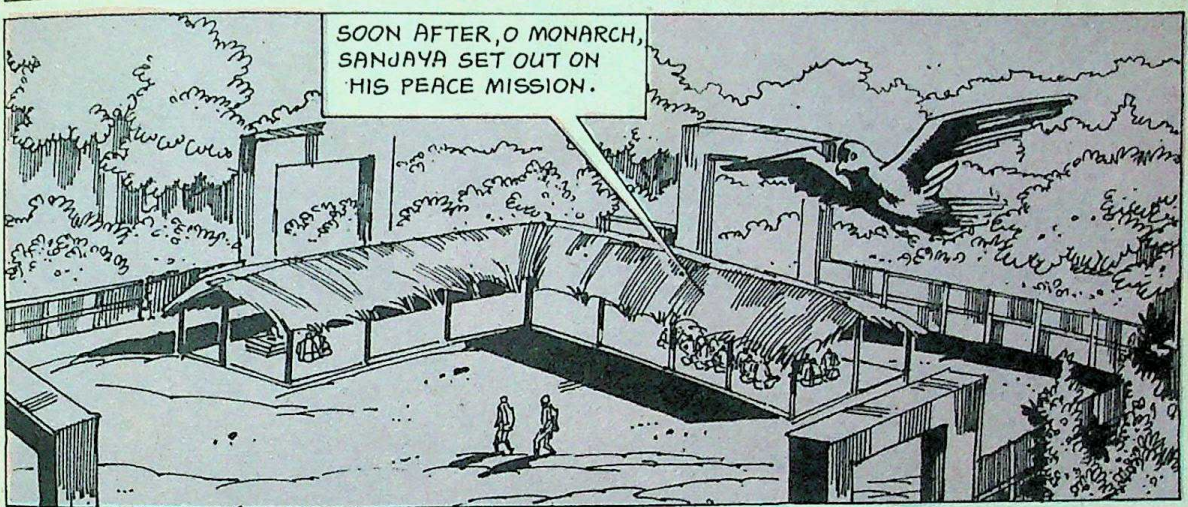

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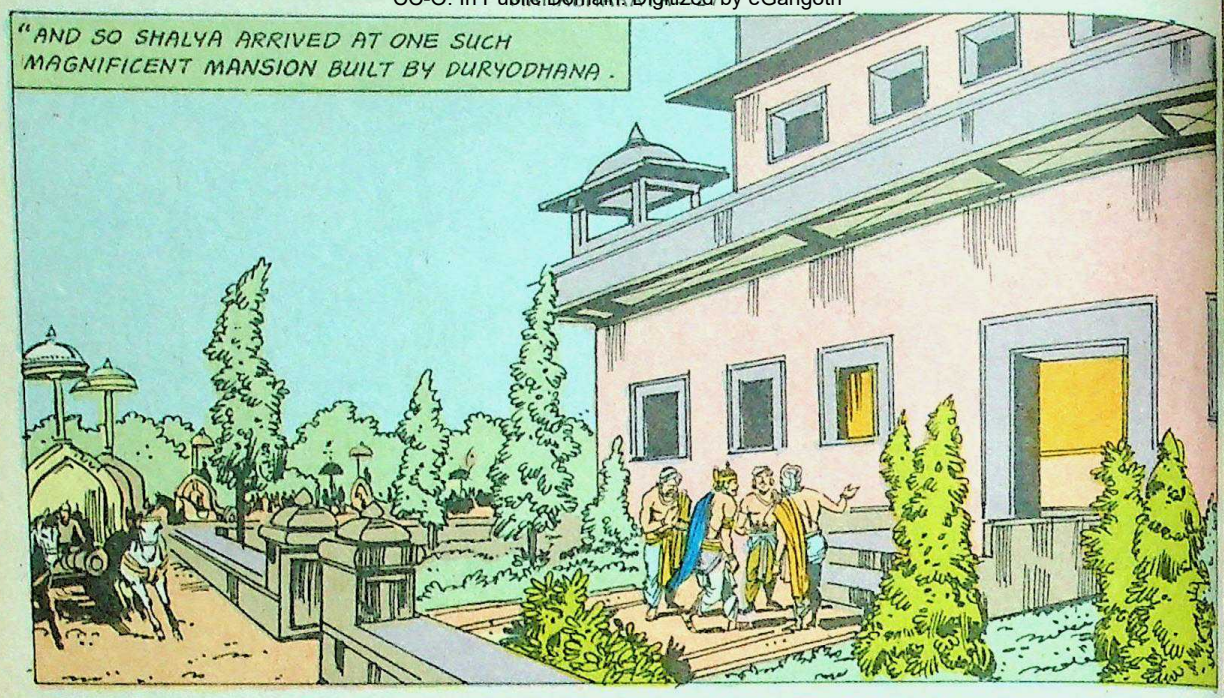

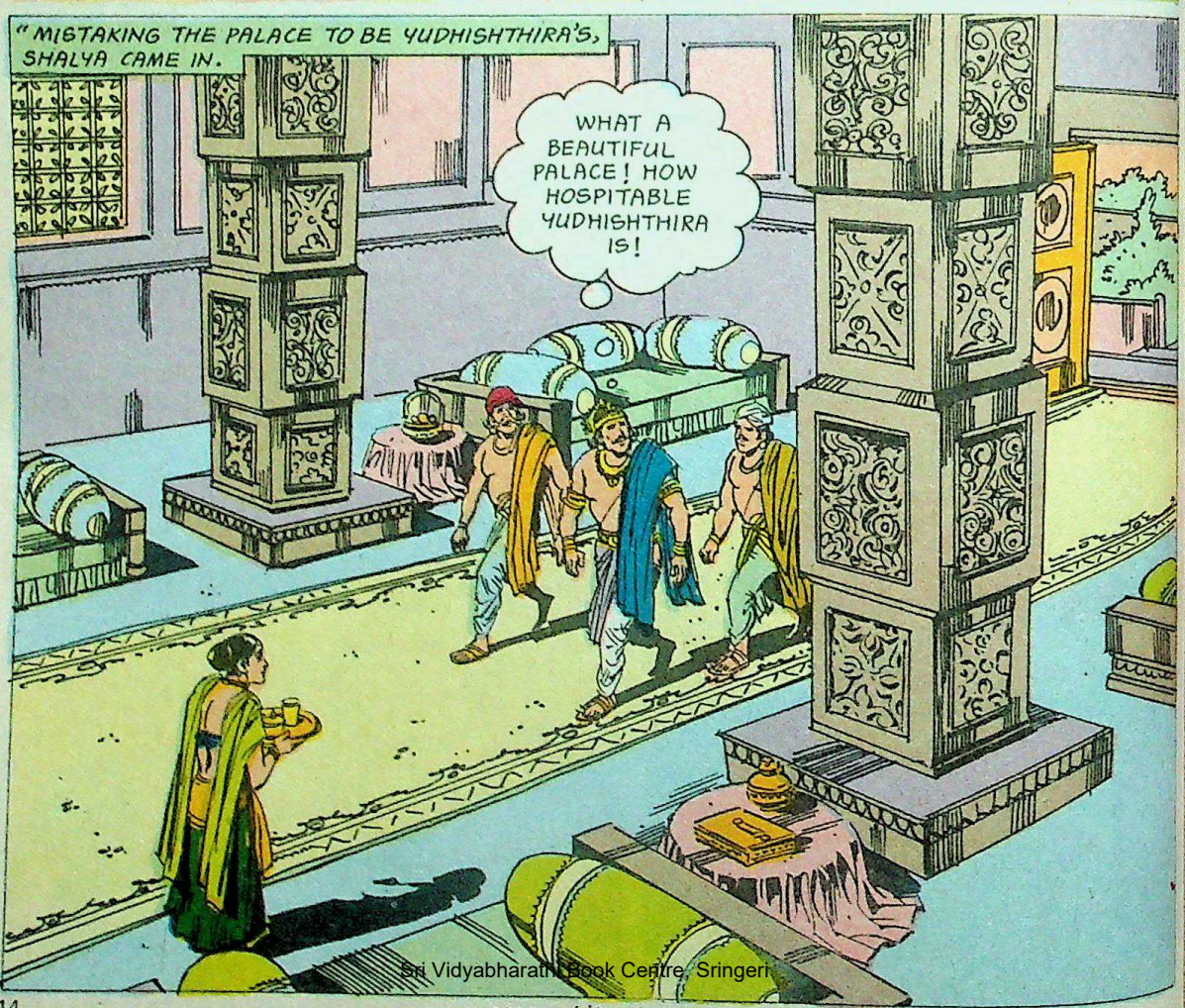

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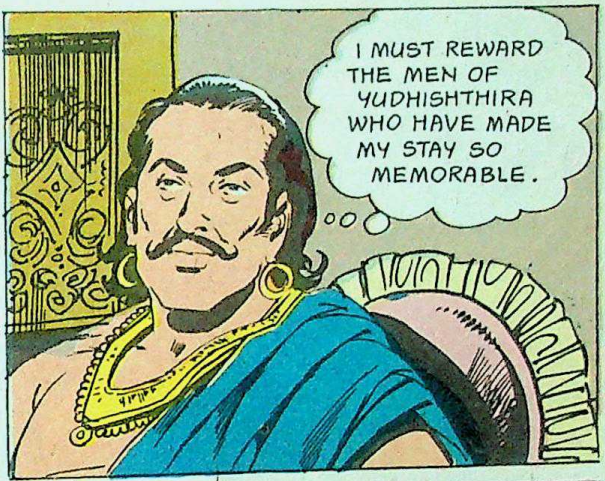

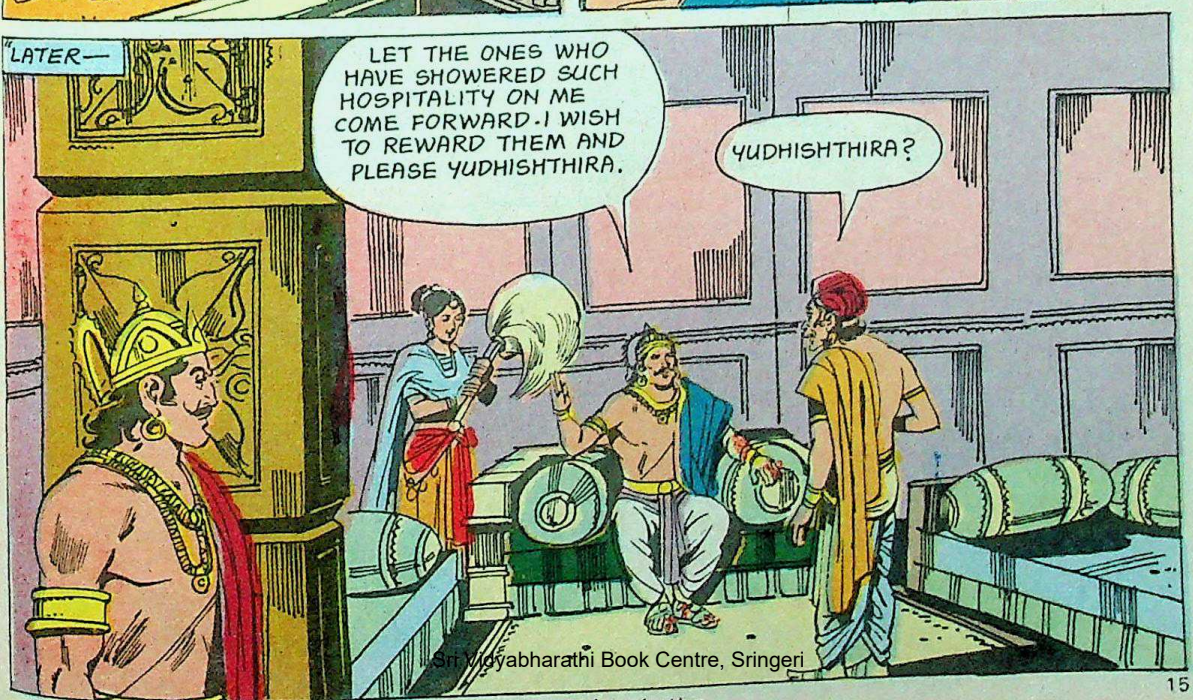

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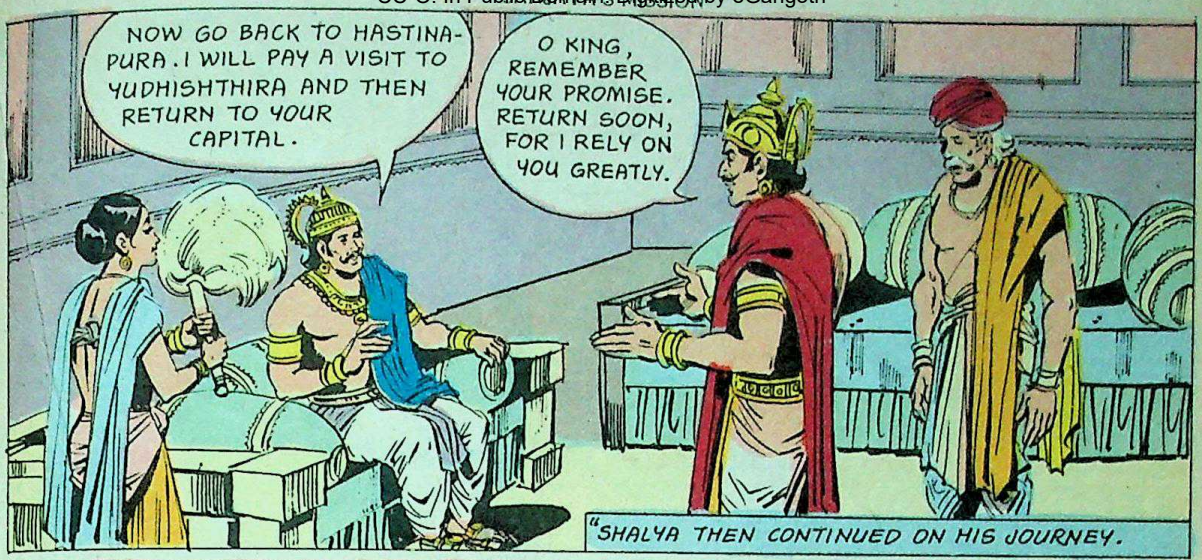

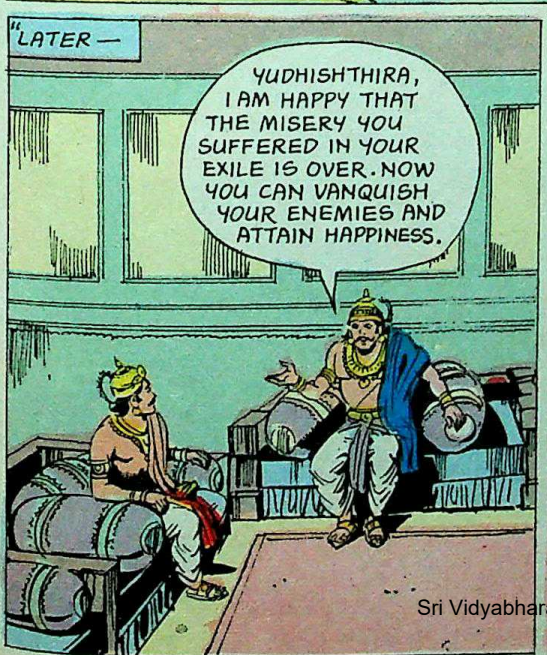

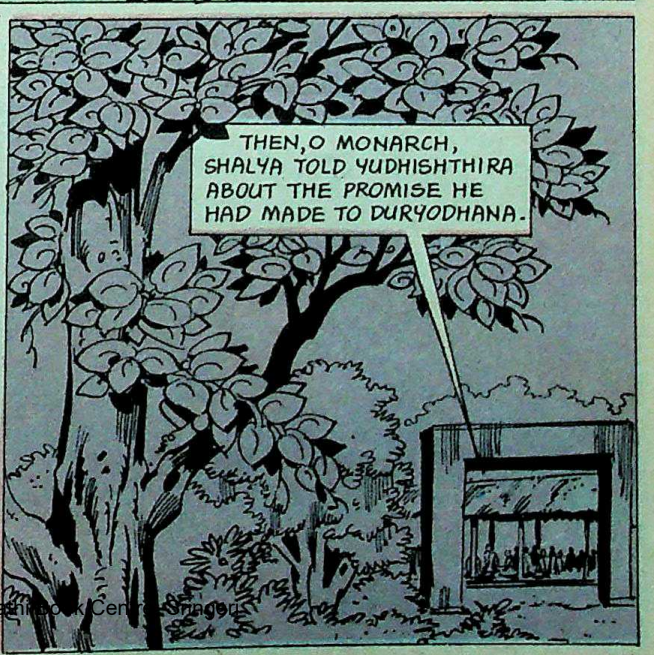

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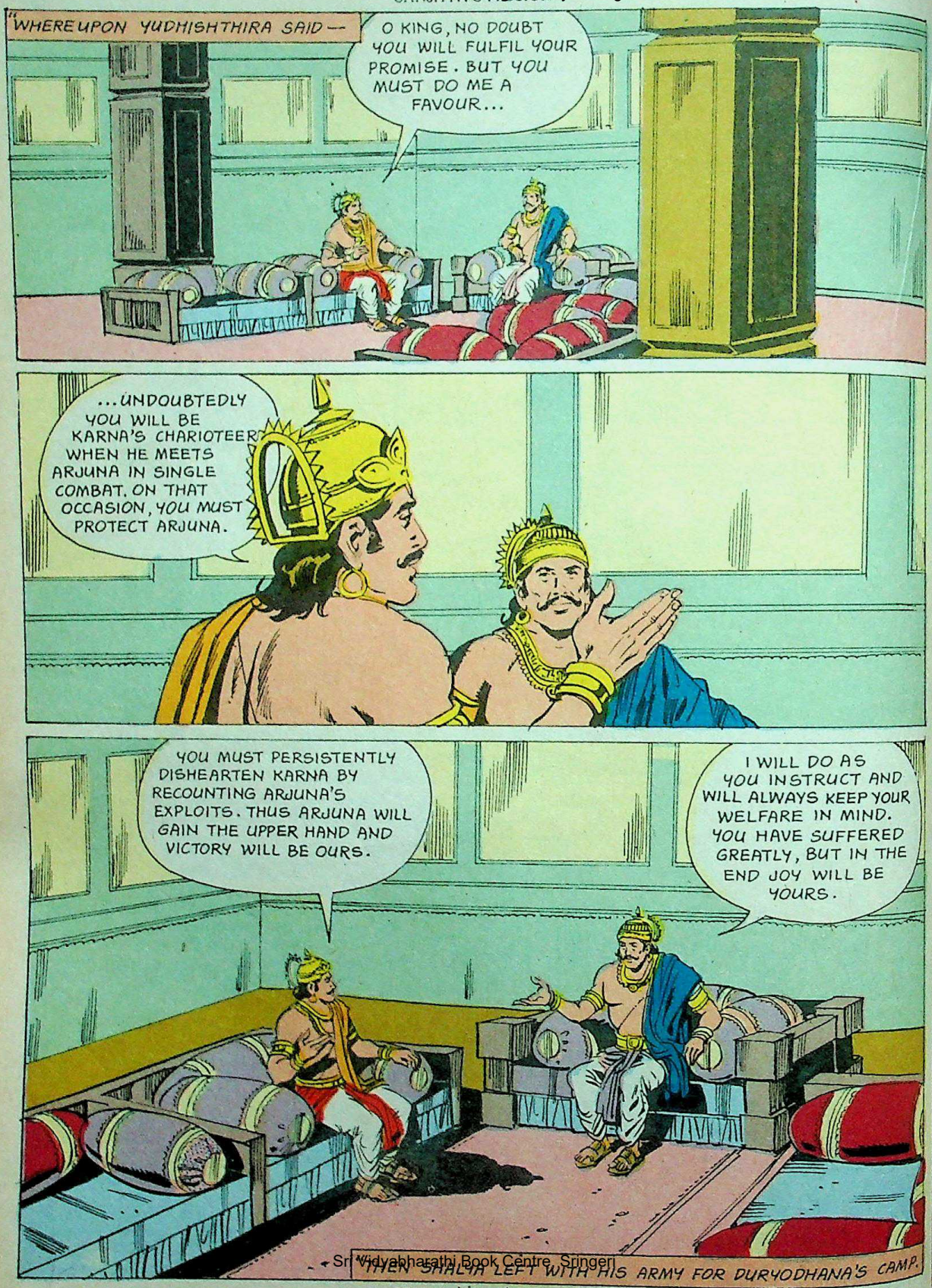

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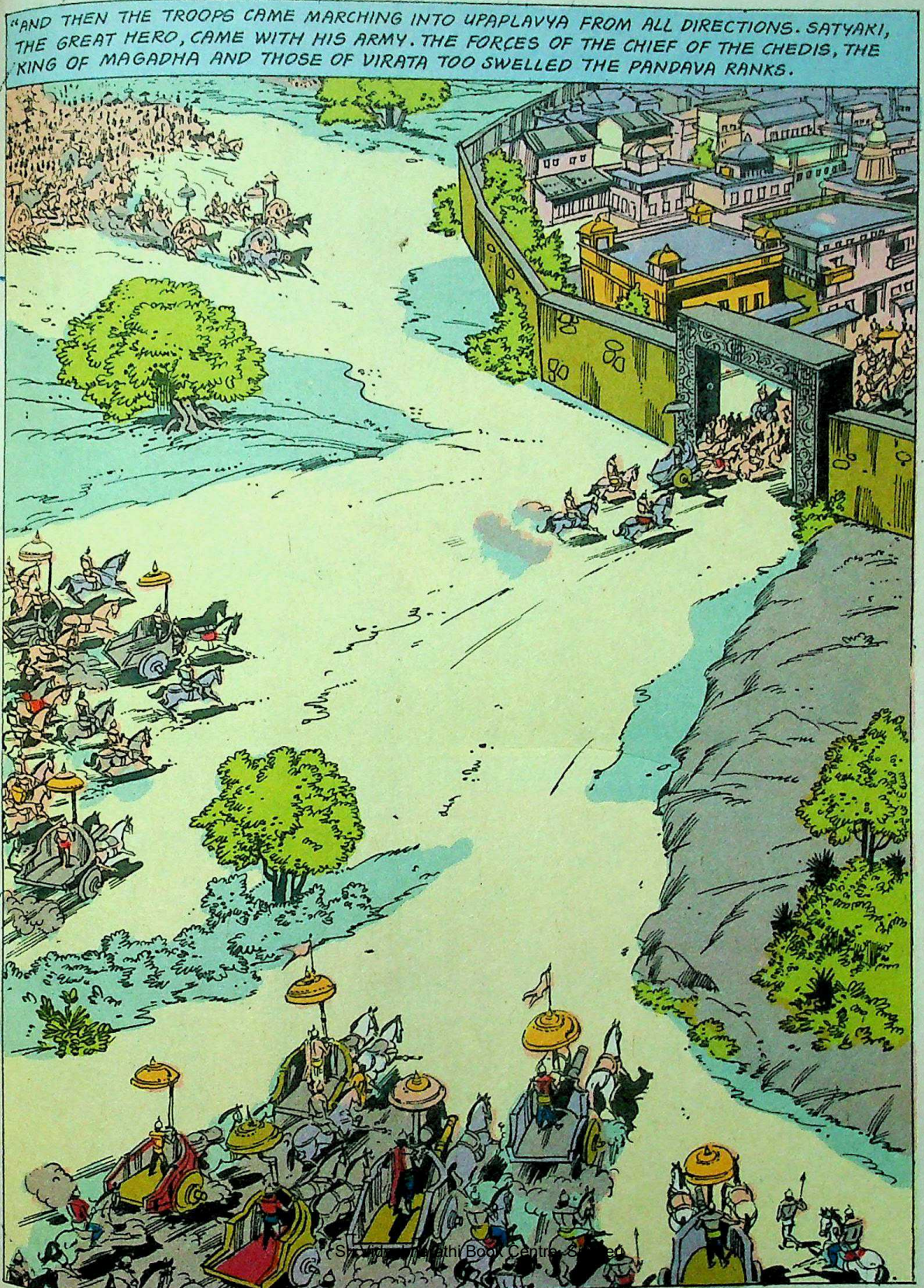
"AND THEN THE TROOPS CAME MARCHING INTO UPAPLAVYA FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. SATYAKI, THE GREAT HERO, CAME WITH HIS ARMY. THE FORCES OF THE CHIEF OF THE CHEDIS, THE KING OF MAGADHA AND THOSE OF VIRATA TOO SWELLED THE PANDAVA RANKS.



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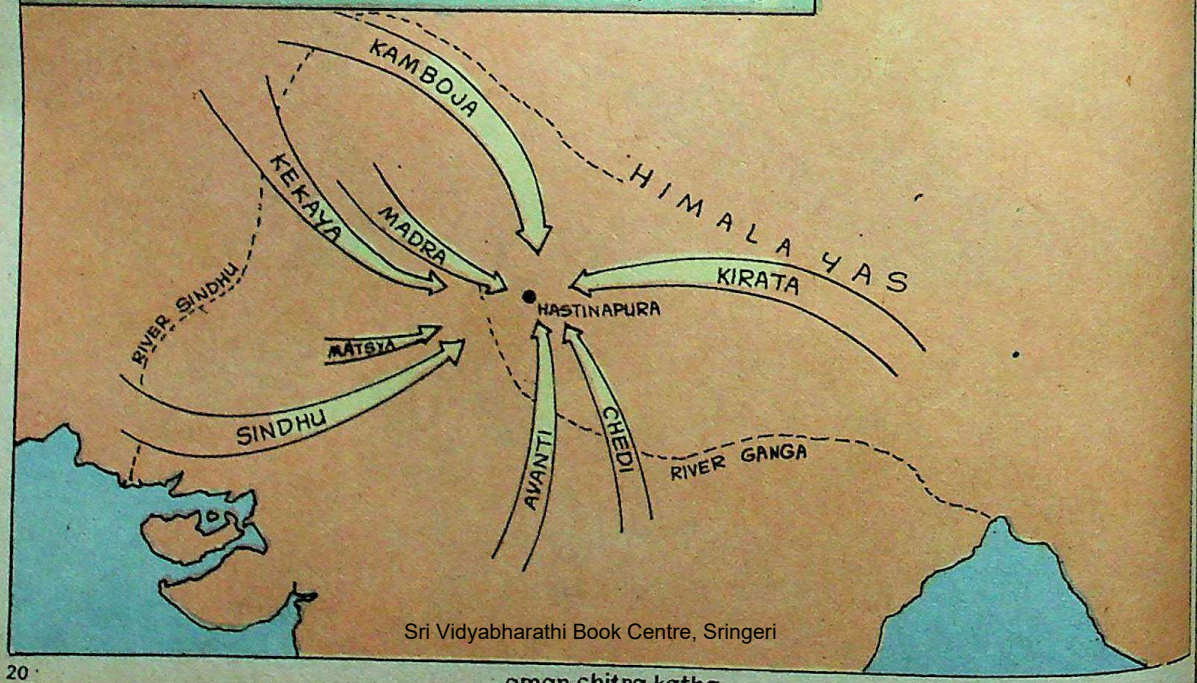
"THE NUMBERS IN THE KAURAVA CAMP TOO WERE SWELLING. KING BHAGADATTA, THE VALIANT BHURISHRAVAS, KRITAVARMAN, THE SON OF THE HRIDIKA, THE BHOJAS, THE ANDHAKAS AND THE KUKURAS — ALL CAME TO DURYODHANA'S AID.

"AND TO HASTINAPURA ALSO CAME OTHER GREAT ARMIES.



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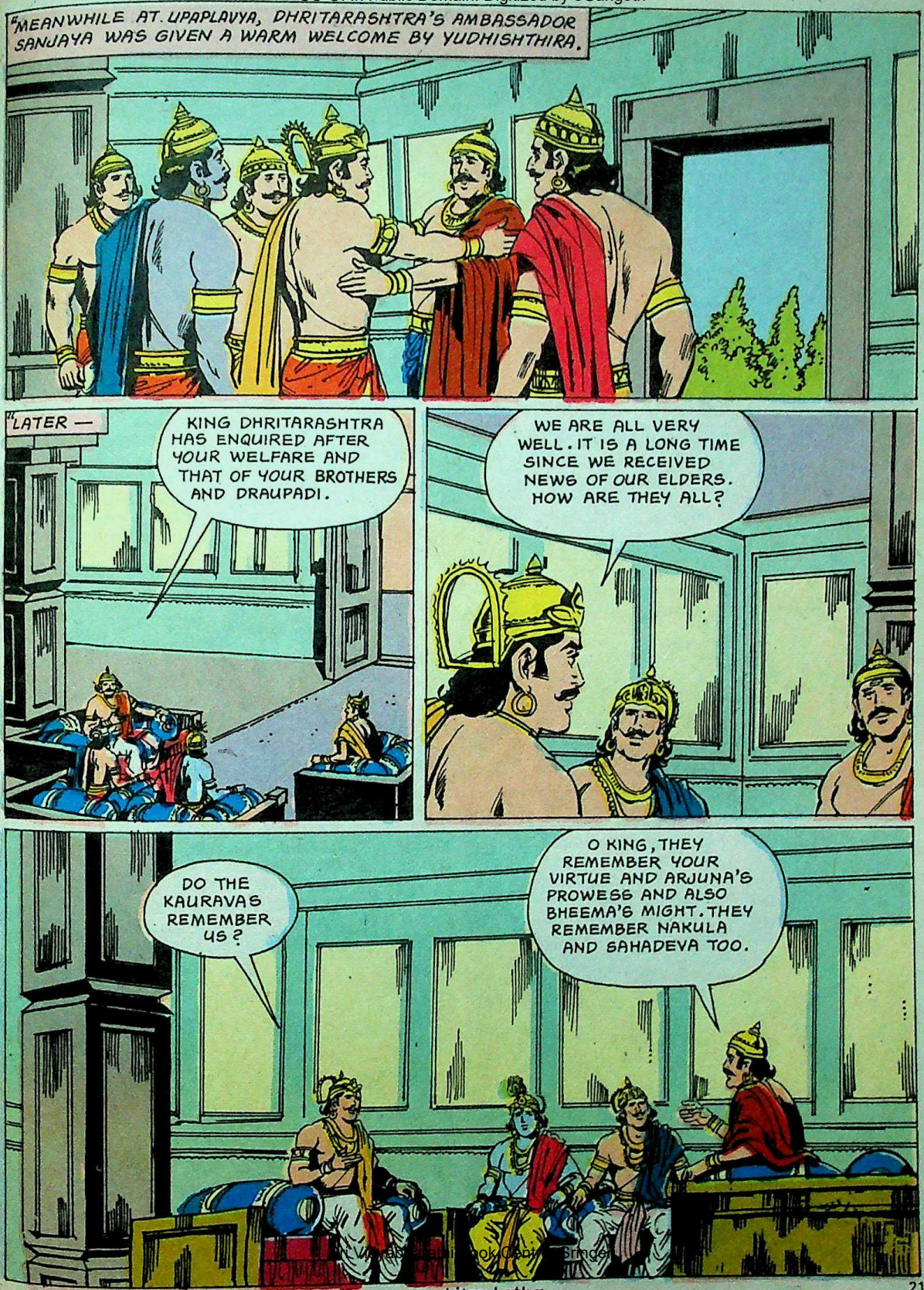

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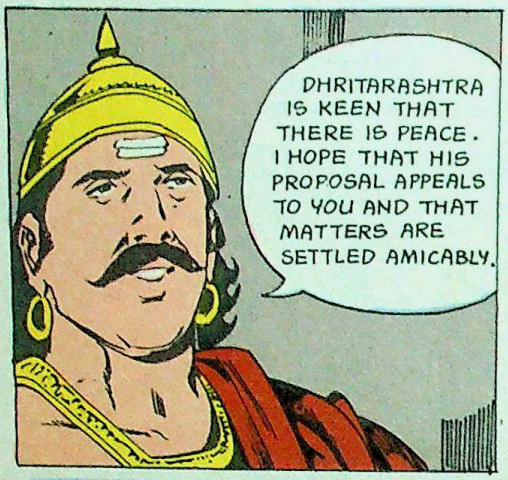

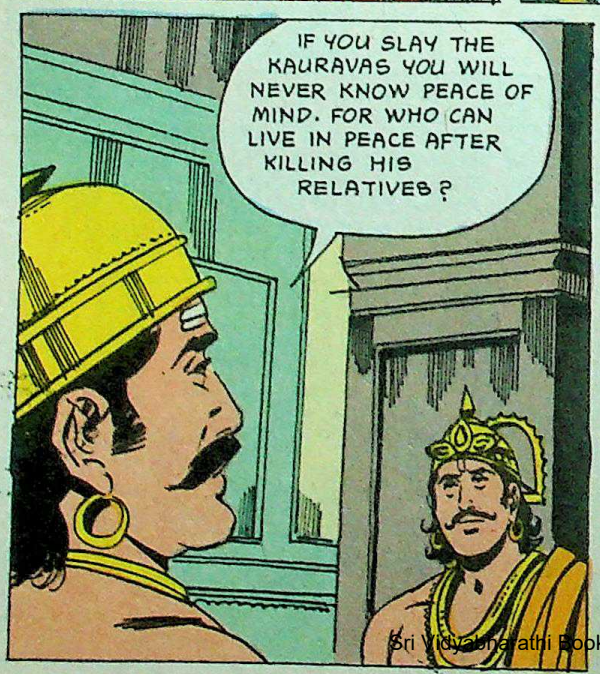

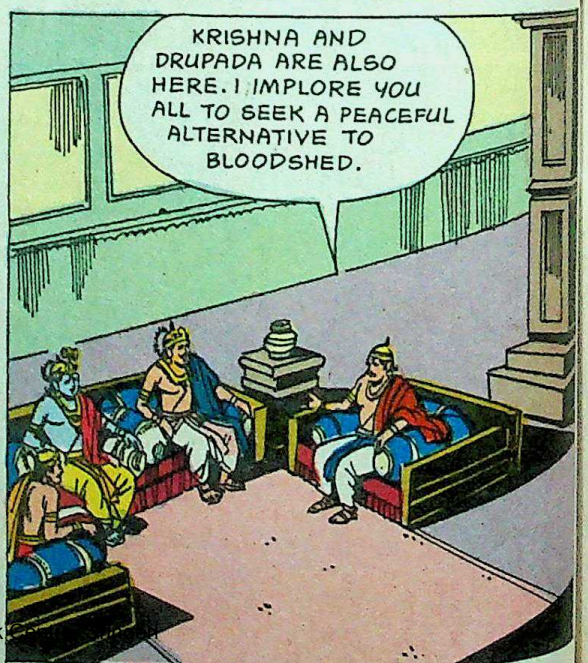

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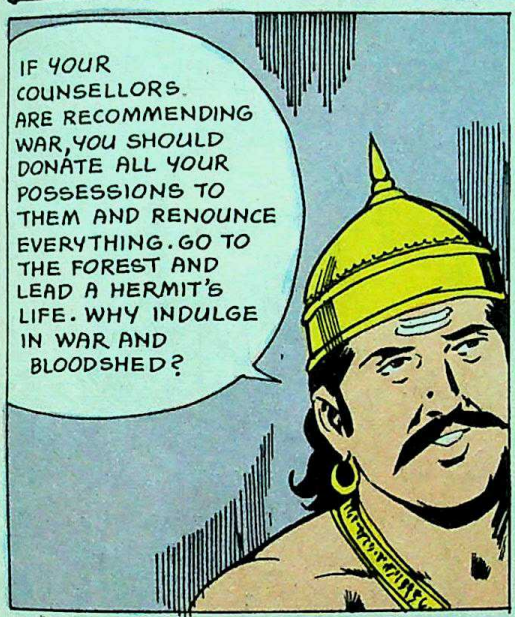

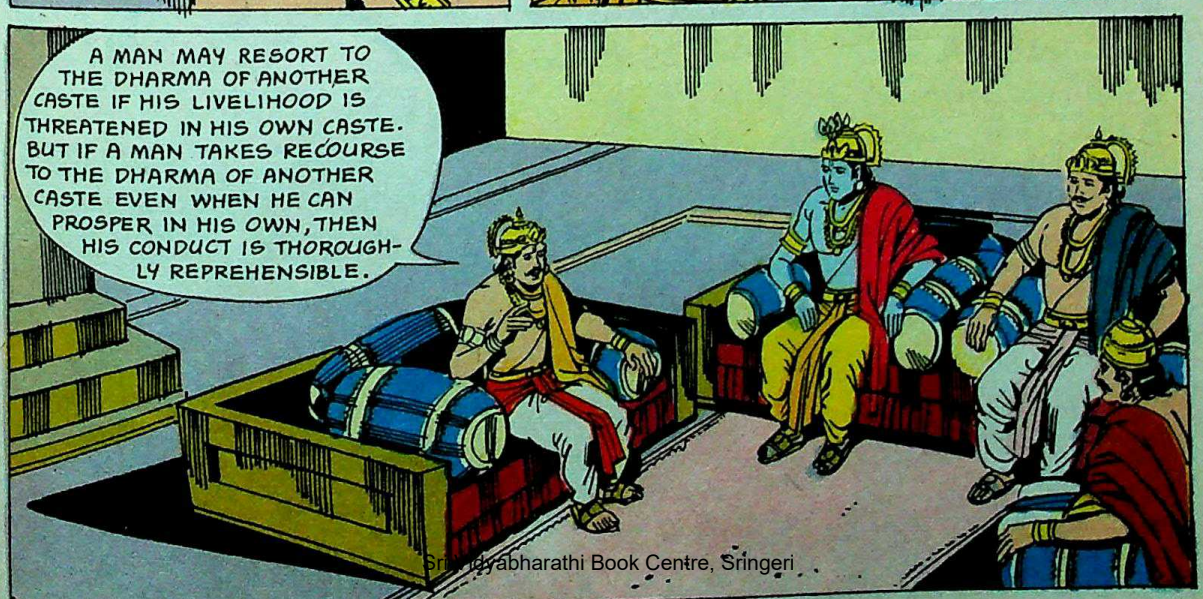

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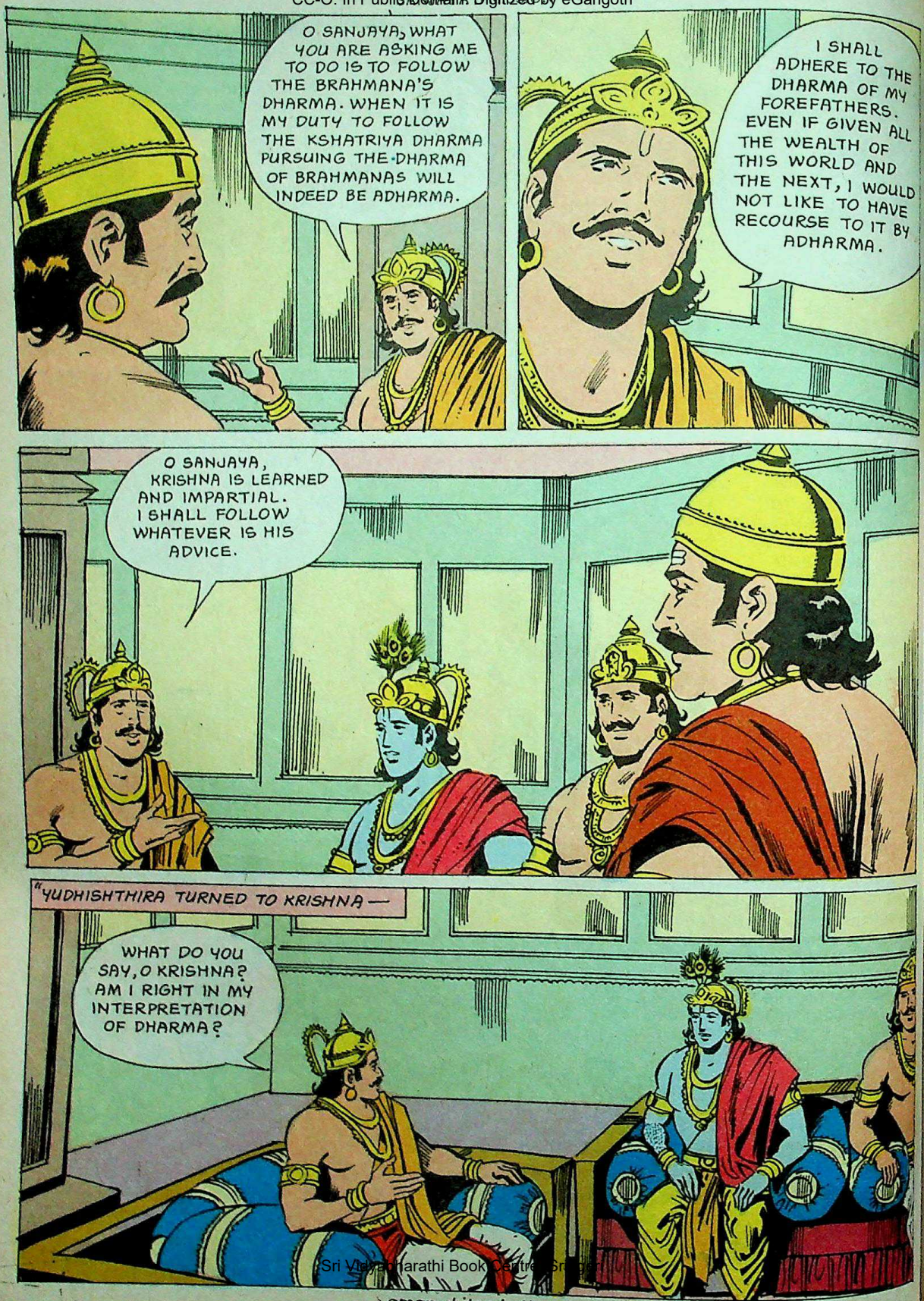

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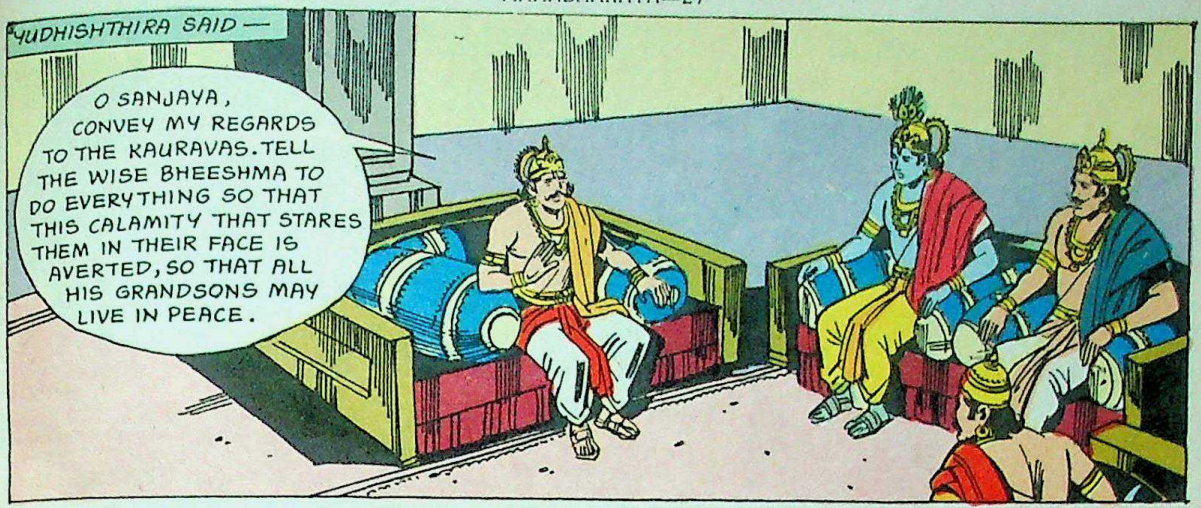

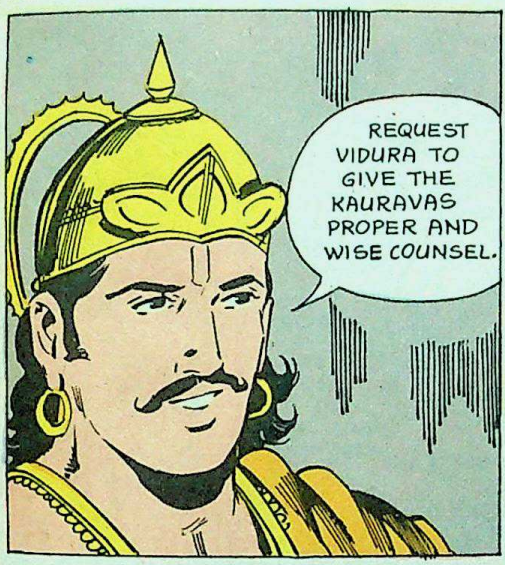

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"SANJAYA ROSE TO LEAVE.

I SHALL NOW BID YOU FAREWELL. FORGIVE ME IF I GOT CARRIED AWAY BY EMOTION AND SPOKE WORDS THAT CAUSED YOU OFFENCE.

"YUDHISHTHIRA BADE HIM FAREWELL BY SAYING—

LET BROTHERS MEET BROTHERS AND FATHERS MEET SONS SMILINGLY. I WISH THE KAURAVAS AND PANDAVAS WILL LIVE IN AMITY.

DISMISSED BY THE PANDAVAS, O MONARCH, SANJAYA SET OFF FOR HASTINAPURA TO CONVEY YUDHISHTHIRA'S MESSAGE.

"THUS ENDS THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL MAHABHARATA.

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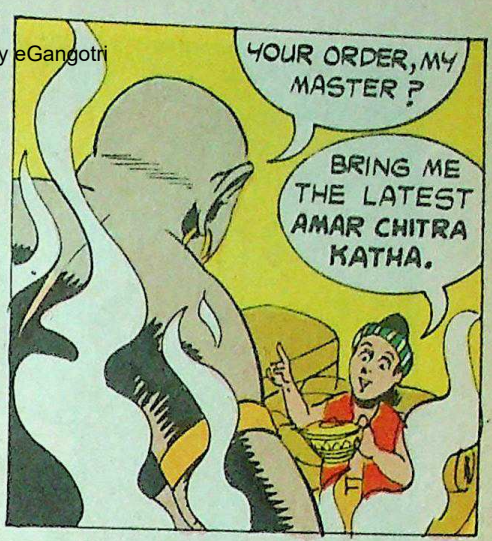

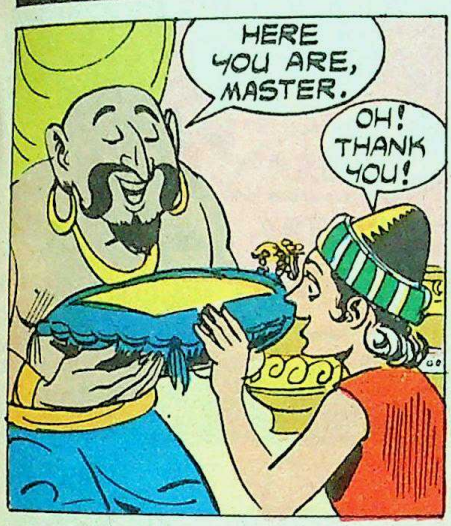

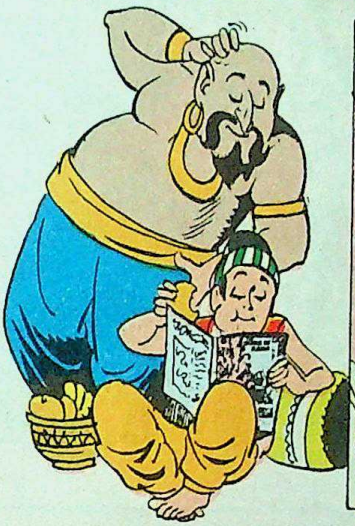

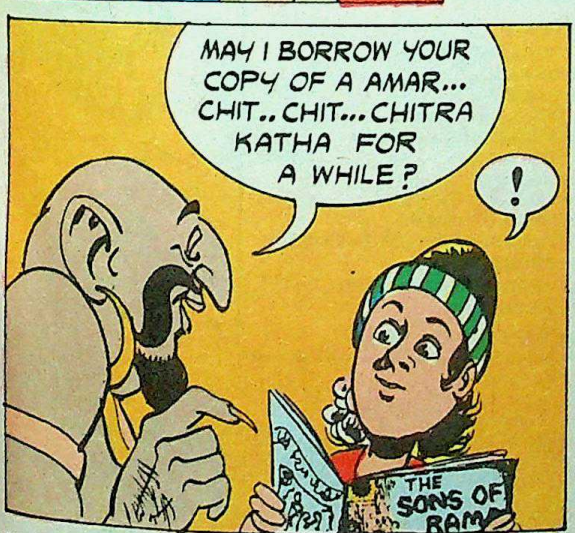

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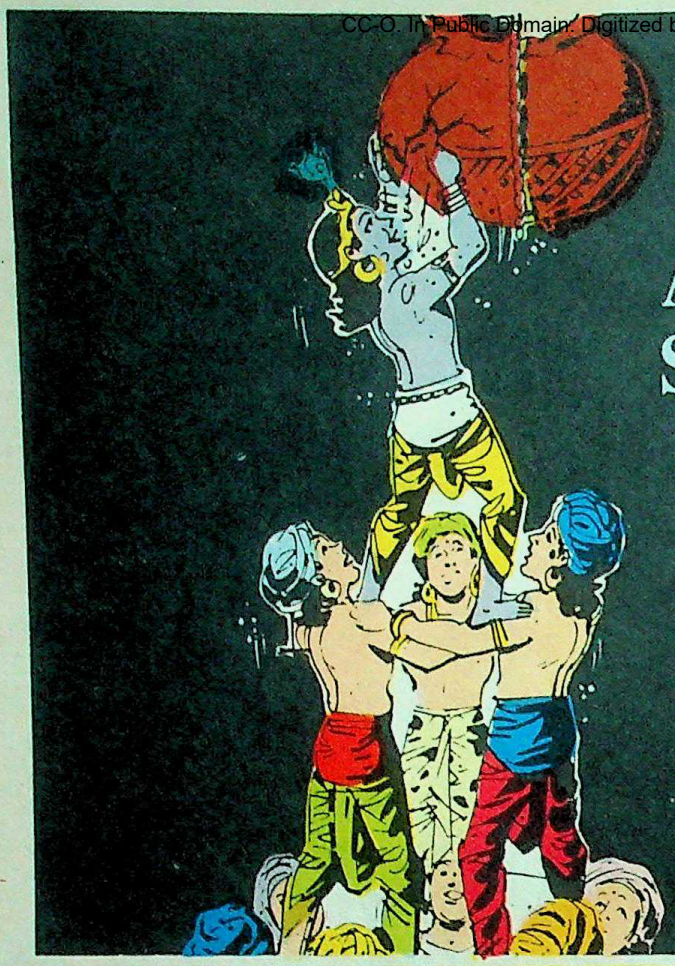

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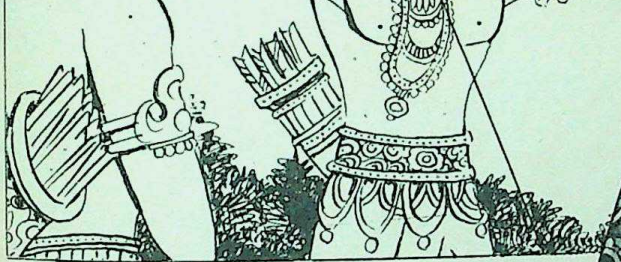

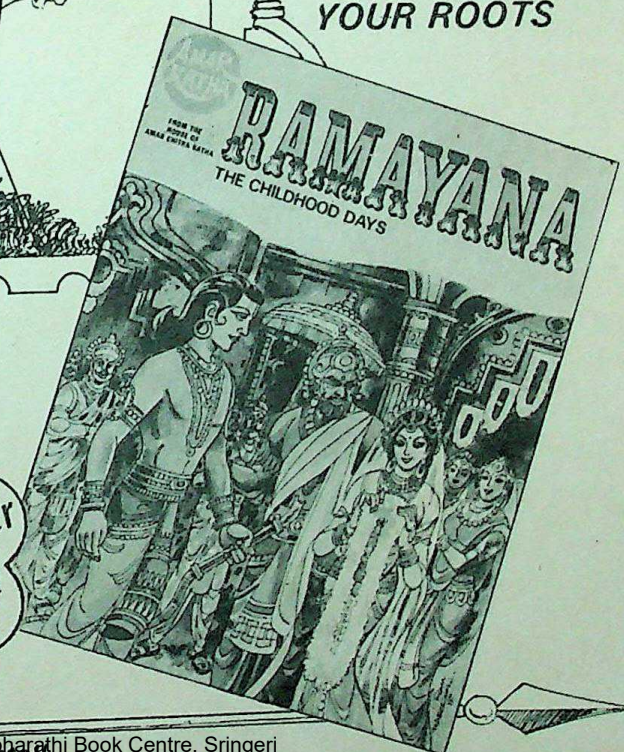

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